

THE MYSTIC'S VISION, VOLUME TWO

Selected Writings of Swami Abhayananda

THE MYSTIC'S VISION: VOLUME TWO
Selected Writings of Swami Abhayananda
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(Last revision: 7-26-2018)
Published and printed in the U.S.A.

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Introduction

This book contains a hand-picked collection of excerpts from my books and other selected articles written over the past thirty years. They are presented in two volumes, and they cover a broad range of spiritual topics relating to mystical experience as well as some science-based speculations.

Most of my books are currently Out of Print, and, for many years, I have made all my books and other writings available as free downloadable PDF documents at my website called “The Mystic’s Vision” (www.themysticsvision.com). Now that I am in my late seventies, without heirs, and do not foresee the reprinting of my earlier books, it seems to me appropriate to make available to future readers a convenient collection of what I consider some of my best writings.

I am in hopes that this collection of my writings will be downloaded and maintained by many of my readers in order to guarantee their preservation and dissemination after I am no longer around to share them with you. Many thanks to all of you who have supported my writings with your kind appreciations over the years. I hope and pray that each and every one of you is blessed by God in this life to know His eternal presence. Namaste.

— Swami Abhayananda, 2016

VI. MEDITATION AND SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Spiritual practices are intended to facilitate the interior “mystical” revelation or manifestation of one’s innate divinity. Such practices include treating others compassionately, mindful recollection of the nondual truth, and meditation on one’s divine Self.

Beyond Learned Ignorance (from *The Wisdom of Vedanta*, 1991)

When we learn about the truth of Unity and the possibility of experiencing our identity with the One, the Absolute, we may imagine that this understanding that we have acquired is the height and summit of attainment. But no; this understanding, this knowledge *about* Truth, is not the experience of Self-realization, but merely the setting of the foot on the path to Self-realization. If we were to say that Self-realization was simply a matter of increased understanding, it would be a gross misrepresentation of that knowledge. “Understanding” is a word which we use to denote the mind’s ability to recognize the significance of a specific concept, thing, or event, and to assimilate that information into our storehouse of knowledge. But the word is woefully inadequate to represent that “realization” which is neither of a concept, thing, or event, but rather of the very Source of all concepts, things, and events.

The realization of the Self is a directly perceived knowledge, more on the order of “seeing” than understanding. “Understanding” refers to *indirect* knowledge; “Self-realization” refers to *direct* knowledge: a distinction that is brought out in a 14th century work on Vedanta, called *Panchadashi*:

"The knowledge arising from enquiry and reflection is of two kinds, indirect and direct. Inquiry ends on the achievement of the direct knowledge of the Self. The indirect knowledge is 'Brahman is'; the direct knowledge is 'I am Brahman.' ¹

"The direct knowledge dissolves the distinction between knower and known; it is an experience of absolute Unity, in which the knower is aware of everything as himself." ²

The consciousness by which we experience knowledge is the screen on which we project thought. Therefore, no amount of thought, of whatever quality, which is projected on that inner screen will reveal or portray the Self to you. For the Self is the screen, the very Consciousness, on which the thoughts are projected. This is why it has so often been emphasized by the knowers of the Self that no amount of thought can reveal Him. He is the Thinker. He is the Source of that consciousness which you experience as you. And it is in His power to reveal Himself, when He so wishes it, and not otherwise.

Listen to what the sages of the *Upanishads* had to say:

"He is known by those who know Him beyond thought.

... If you think, "I know Him well," you do not know the Truth. You only perceive that appearance of Brahman produced by the inner senses. Continue to meditate.³

"What cannot be thought with the mind, but That whereby the mind thinks: know that alone to be Brahman."⁴

"...It is not what is thought that we should wish to know; we should know the thinker. "He is my Self": this one should know. "He is my Self": this one should know."⁵

The activity of the intellect, which is to say, the reasoning faculty, must be left far behind in the ascent to God, to the Self. Of course, it is by the means of this active intellect that we come to accept the fact of Unity, the fact of a transcendent Mind from which all minds devolve and to which they evolve again. But that is the extent of its function; to gather information and reach the proper conclusion. Once it has done so and has established the need for the mind's devotion to its Source, for the inversion of its gaze from outward to inward, then it has fulfilled its function. And then it is time for one's practice to begin: the turning of the mind to quiet reflection, meditation.

To many, this word, *meditation*, means the swirling around in one's mind of one or another concept or idea, as one might swirl a sip of wine in one's mouth to garner its taste to the full. But meditation proper, is not the dwelling on thoughts and ideas, but rather the alert and expectant search of the inner horizon for absolute clarity of vision, much as a lover might eagerly scan the horizon for a sign of her returning beloved. There is no room for reasoning here; indeed, in this state, thought, other than a direct call to the Beloved, is a distraction, like weeds cropping up to obscure the distant view. It is the Infinite we wish to see; it is God's thrilling caress we wish to feel; it is the unveiling and delimitation of our consciousness that we wish to experience.

It is not reasoning or cunning that brings us to that vision of Truth; rather, it is prayer, it is longing, it is purity of heart, and naked humility of soul which brings His mercy; it is a likeness of motive and will, conforming to His, which brings the soul into the necessary transparency for merging into the Absolute. Again, hear the words of the Upanishads:

"Not even through deep knowledge can the Self be reached, unless evil ways are abandoned, and there is rest in the senses, concentration in the mind, and peace in one's heart. ⁶

"He is seen by a pure heart and by a mind whose thoughts are pure. ...Not through much learning is the Self reached, nor through the intellect and the memorizing of the sacred teachings. The Self is reached by those whom He chooses; to His chosen the Self reveals His glory." ⁷

However, let us not imagine that the exercise of the intellect in Self-inquiry and reflection is a dead-end street. It is definitely not Self-realization, but it *is* a path to Self-realization. "But," you may object, "if the Self is beyond mind, thought, and speech, how can thought, speech, or the mind enable one to reach the Self? Is not the intellect completely useless in acquiring Self-knowledge?"

And the answer is, "No. It is not useless." It is in fact most useful and necessary in bringing the soul to Self-realization. For, as the intellect focuses more and more on the Self, it, itself, becomes refined. Ultimately, the intellect *becomes* pure Consciousness, and disappears as intellect. To comprehend this, we may think of the analogy of a flame produced by burning camphor. When the flame burns up the camphor, the flame is extinguished as well. The flame is the means to dissolve the camphor, and, in the process, it dissolves itself as well. Likewise, intellectual knowledge is used to burn up ignorance; and as it does so, it uses itself up as well, and becomes silence. As thought becomes more and more clear and refined, it leads us, beyond thought, to the silence of pure Consciousness. Then, only the pure stillness of absolute Consciousness remains, beyond the contraries of knowledge and ignorance.

The intellect, after all, is nothing but a contracted form of the one universal Intelligence. Its light is but a dim reduction of the universal Light of Consciousness. And, because it is nothing else but the one Intelligence, it is capable of expanding to its original state. It is a little like the expansion of the aperture of a lens; when it is narrowed, only a little pinpoint of light enters it; but when it is widened, its scope is greatly expanded, and the light streams in in its fullness. Likewise, the small aperture through which we presently experience Consciousness can be expanded.

This Intelligence, this Consciousness, which we *are*, is the only means we have of experiencing the Self. Therefore, yes, the universal Consciousness is experienced, in a sense, through the intellect. But to say this may be misleading; for, it is not the activity of the intellect which is capable of revealing the Self, but rather the

intellect itself *is* that universal Consciousness in a contracted form. And when the Self is realized, it is known as that very Intelligence by which you have always thought and wondered and known. It is the “you” who has always been you.

The term, “learned ignorance,” which I have used in the title of this talk, is the title of a book by a 15th century Cardinal of the Catholic Church, named Nicholas of Cusa, who was extremely interested in addressing this question of whether the intellect was capable of knowing God. In Nicholas’ time, the learned Doctors of the Church were much occupied with discussing theology and dialectics, with the thought that such intellectual busyness was the holiest of activities. Nicholas wrote his book, *de docta ignorantia*, “On Learned Ignorance,” to convince these learned scholars that no amount of reasoning, no amount of intellectual effort, could reveal That which is beyond the reach of words and intellect.

His theme was that all the metaphysical haranguing and theological bickering of such learned fellows was, in fact, nothing more than ignorance, “learned ignorance”; and that the highest state to which all their learning could possibly bring them was to the knowledge that they didn’t know the ultimate Truth. It was this highest state possible through learning, which he termed, “learned ignorance.” And, it was this state, which Nicholas regarded as the starting point from which one could then truly embark on the spiritual journey to the *direct* knowledge of God.

Here is a passage from his book in which he explains that the reasoning of the intellect cannot possibly reach to God:

"Reason strives for knowledge, and yet this natural striving is not adequate to the knowledge of the essence of God, but only to the knowledge that God ...is beyond all conception and knowledge."⁸

He goes on to say:

"The Reality, which is the Truth of all beings, is unattainable in its purity [through learning]; all philosophers have sought it, and none has found it, as it is; and the more profoundly learned in this ignorance [we are], the more we shall approach Truth itself."⁹

And in another book, called *de sapientia*, “On Wisdom,” he describes his method of approach to Truth itself:

"Wisdom [or the one Intelligence], shining in all things, invites us, with a certain foretaste of Its effects, to be borne to It with a wonderful desire. For life itself is an intelligent Spirit, having in itself a certain innate foretaste through which it searches with great desire for the very Font of its own life. Without that foretaste, it could neither seek after It nor know when it had acquired It. It is due to this that it is moved toward It as its proper life. Every spirit finds it sweet to ascend continually to the very Principle of life, even though this appears inaccessible. For a persistent and continued ascent to (the Principle and Source of) life is the constituent element of increased happiness.¹⁰

"... This Wisdom [or supreme Intelligence] is not to be found in the art of oratory, or in great books, but in a withdrawal from these sensible things and in a turning to the most simple and infinite reality. You will learn how to receive it into a temple purged from all vice, and by fervent love to cling to it until you may taste it and see how sweet That is which is all sweetness. Once this has been tasted, all things which you now consider as important will appear as vile, and you will be so humbled that no arrogance or other vice will remain in you. Once having tasted this Wisdom, you will inseparably adhere to it with chaste and pure heart. You will choose rather to forsake this world and all else that is not of this Wisdom, and, living with unspeakable happiness, you will die. After death you will rest eternally in that fond embrace which the eternally blessed wisdom of God Himself vouchsafed to grant both to you and to me." ¹¹

In closing, let me say that learning and the knowledge reflected in the intellect are wonderful indeed. Let us not disparage learning or intelligent discussion. It is the clarification of ideas through reasoning whereby the mind assimilates knowledge to itself, and centers in on the Truth. However, the greatest wisdom, such as that acquired by Socrates, is the acquisition of the knowledge that one doesn't know, and cannot by any intellectual means know, the ultimate Reality. The innate desire to know It can only be fulfilled and satisfied by *direct* revelation—by Grace, and not by any amount of study or thought.

It is at this stage of wisdom, as Nicholas of Cusa insists, that we are ready and able to embark on our *sadhana*, our search for God. This wisdom leads us beyond thought, beyond reasoning, to a simplicity attainable only by the wise fools of this world. It is the simple, child-like humility before our Lord and Father, by which

we purify our hearts for the reception of His mercy and grace. In that grace we shall find the knowledge and freedom and perfect happiness, which we seek.

Let us then give up this discussion, these wordy ideas, and turn to the simple regard of God, who is ever-present to us within.

Meditation

There is a Knowledge beyond knowledge, won only by the brave, who soar on wings of love, beyond the knowing mind. The penetrating laser-light of intellect is able to comprehend the spoken truth—but it cannot know the source of its own light. It can form myriads of concepts about the knower, but it cannot turn its light on itself and thereby *know* the knower.

To know that knowing Self, we must set out blindly, without words, without images; even that shining intellect which is our pride and joy must be left behind. With no borrowed or reflected light, with no idea-projecting faculty to cast images on the cave-wall of the conscious mind, we must enter naked, empty-handed, and alone into that dark light.

Without intellect, without a preconceived identity or even existence; unknowing, unseeing, guided only by a faith in Truth and the longing of a pure heart, we may enter into the silence of that all-knowing Light. There, no questions rise to separate the knower from the known. There, the Knower is alone—with a Knowledge beyond knowledge, won only by the brave, who soar on wings of love, beyond the knowing mind.

NOTES:

1. Vidyanarany, *Panchadashi*, 6:16; Shastri (trans.), London, Shanti Sadan, 1965, p. 97.
2. In the revelation of that absolute Self, the separate ego-identity is revealed to be illusory, and it is revealed that the duality of 'I' and 'Thou', of body and soul, as well as all other dualities, is also illusory. The duality of matter and spirit, body and soul, arises, as do all dualities, from the establishment of an individual identity separate from God. With the existence of an 'I' (the ego), the 'other' also comes into existence; that is how duality is produced. That separate identity, or individual ego, the producer of duality, is an extremely subtle thing, masking the nondual reality; and it is dispelled only by the grace of God. This ego is a veil separating us from the awareness of our true Self, our Godhood; and *it is a veil only He, the Divine Mind, can lift*.

What, then, is this ego that stands to block our view of eternity? How can we comprehend it? It can't be grasped or dispelled or even held up to the light of knowledge. It seems that it is an imposed ignorance that automatically accompanies embodiment. In effect, it is our Lord who casts this dust in our eyes and blinds us to our true eternal Self; and He alone has the power to dispel it. No matter how we try to escape its limiting perspective, we are steadfastly caught in its grip. It separates us out from our limitless being, squeezing us into a narrow individuality, hiding from us God's face and our own divinity in Him. We can only raise our eyes to Him in love and longing, praying that He will soon return us home once again to His all-inclusive awareness.

3. Kena Upanishad, II:1.
4. *Ibid.*, I:5.
5. Kaushitaki Upanishad, 3:8.
6. Katha Upanishad, II:24.
7. *Ibid.*, II:23; Mundaka Upanishad, II:3.
8. Nicholas of Cusa, *De venatione sapientiae*, Ch. xii; Beck, Lewis W., *Early German Philosophy*; Cambridge, Mass., Belknap Press, 1969, p. 64.
9. Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia*, I:3; Heron, Germain (trans.), *On Learned Ignorance*; New Haven, Yale University Press, 1954, p.
10. Nicholas of Cusa, *De sapientia*, I; Dolan, John P. (ed.), *Unity And Reform: Selected Writings of Nicholas of Cusa*; Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1962, p. 107.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

* * *

2. The Unchanging Testament (from *The Wisdom of Vedanta*, 1991)

There is a summit of knowledge which has been reached by a few lone souls such as the Buddha, Jesus, Shankara, Ramakrishna, and others. This knowledge came to them by the grace of God, revealing the truth that all existence is forever one. This being so, there are no separate beings such as the Buddha, Jesus, Shankara, etc., but only the One, knowing Himself in all these various forms. Indeed, it is just this knowledge which constitutes the message of every seer of Truth: 'The One exists as you and me. Realize this truth; know that you are that One and be free of the pain of enmity.'

There is but one religion, not many. It is only the childish and the deluded who think otherwise. There is but one substance which is variously named as 'water', 'pani', 'jal', 'agua'; but no matter what it is called, that same substance quenches the thirst of all. There is but one Life, though it takes various forms, such as tiger, serpent, or man; all breathe one air, all see one light. Understand too that one all-pervading Intelligence fills all minds, gives conscious Light to all that lives. He alone is, and He lives and breathes as us.

In knowing Him, all purposes of life are fulfilled. In shedding darkness from our minds, by rising high above the clouds of 'me' and 'mine', we come closer to this Light, and merge our souls in Him. This is the tale which all have told who've seen the Truth. It is neither old nor new, but it is an unchanging testament that neither time nor place on earth affects. Jesus, Buddha, Ramakrishna—all have reached that same summit, and shown to us the way. Now, we must climb alone and find our way into the Truth which they enjoy and make it finally our own.

* * *

3. How The Enlightened Man Lives (from *The Wisdom of Vedanta*, 1991)

How does the enlightened man live? He lives free of concern for himself, for he lives only to serve. As he views all the world as his own self, he acts always for the good of all. He is relaxed, asking for nothing; he relies on the universal order, trusting entirely in the perfect benevolence of the One. He is friendly to everyone, knowing all are struggling in the face of death. He gives, unconcerned with receiving, for the One he serves fills his heart with joy, and that is all the reward he needs.

He is wise, but he appears to be a fool. He appears to be poor, but he is the wealthiest of men. He lives and acts in the world like everyone else, finding enjoyment in pleasures, like everyone else. But, to him, it is all a game, quickly put aside. He does not follow the broad pathways of men, but he keeps to his own quiet ways. His is a life of peace, hidden and calm, though he accomplishes a thousand marvelous deeds. He seeks no glory or honor, and so is ignored by the world. He is a roaring fire, shedding light for generations, warming hearts both living and unborn; yet, in his own heart, he never strays from the sweet tranquility of his eternal home.

* * *

4. As A Man Thinks (from *The Wisdom of Vedanta*, 1991; rev. 9-5-2017)

Anyone who is a student of religion is aware that, here in the West, we tend to *externalize* the Spirit, regarding God almost exclusively as 'Thou', a Being separate from and external to ourselves. But in the Eastern world, specifically in the ancient land of India, the Spirit is recognized to be the Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss that constitutes and sustains the being of every living soul; and while the Divine is often regarded in the popular Indian culture as an external Deity, and referred to as Brahman, Vishnu, or Shiva—or, generically, as *Bhagavan* (Lord), it is just as common to see the Divine *internalized* and referred to in Indian spiritual literature as the *Atman*, or the Self. This understanding of the internal Deity brings into clarity the necessity of the inner conformity of a man's mind to that Divine Self within him.

The great Greek philosopher and mystic, Heraclitus, who lived over 500 years before the Current Era, expressed a profound truth in just three words. He said: "Character is destiny." The meaning, of course, is that we become what we become because of our good or bad qualities. Our lives are simply manifestations of our inner soul and reflect either the beauty or the ugliness of our character. In other words, we are what we think. This is a truth that has been expressed throughout the centuries; and it is a truth that has been elaborately treated in one particular Upanishad, the *Maitri Upanishad*. This Upanishad deals very thoroughly with this subject, and it explains also the nature of the soul and the means of its progress toward Self-realization. I'd like to share with you a few excerpts from this Upanishad in order to shed some light on the teachings of the ancient sages of India regarding these issues.

The *Maitri Upanishad*, like many others, is composed in the form of a dialogue. Now it should be clear that, if you're going to have a didactic dialogue, there must be one participant who is ignorant, and asks all the questions; and there must be one who is wise, to give all the answers to the questions. This dialogue is no different; it is between the wise god, Prajapati, and the ignorant, though sincere, angels who ask Prajapati:

"O Master, this body, without consciousness, is but a chariot without a driver. Who, then, is the Spirit by whose power it becomes conscious? Who, in other words, is the driver of the chariot?"

And Prajapati answers:

"There is a Spirit who exists within the things of the world, and yet who is beyond the things of this world. He is pure Consciousness; He dwells in serenity as the Infinite, the Eternal. He is beyond the life of the body and the mind. He was never born, He never dies; He is everlasting, ever one, and self-sustaining. *He* is the Spirit whose power gives consciousness to the body. *He* is the driver of the chariot."

Prajapati continues:

"That infinite Consciousness becomes the finite consciousness of man, possessing the power of discrimination and understanding, and also erroneous conceptions. He is, in truth, the great Lord, the Source of all creation, and the universal Self of all. This Spirit is Consciousness and gives consciousness to the body. *He* is the driver of the chariot."

What Prajapati says in answer to the questioning angels is not at all apparent to everyone. There are so many questions that arise in one's mind about the nature of existence, consciousness, the hereafter, etc. The Spirit is invisible, so how can one know that it even exists? By what means did the author of this Upanishad come by this knowledge? The Spirit cannot be seen, but It can be known by man, Its own manifestation, when It is sought within one's own consciousness. Prajapati explains to his listeners:

"Those sages who have known Him say that it is He who wanders on this earth from body to body, free from the good and bad effects of actions. He is free because He is free from the sense of *I*, and He is invisible, incomprehensible, concealed in His own mystery.

"He seems to act, but He does not act. He seems not even to exist; but He is Existence itself. He exists in His own being, pure, never changing, never moving, unstainable; and, in peace, beyond desires, He watches the drama of the universe. He is hidden behind the veil of the universal appearance; but He is ever One in His own Bliss.

"The supreme Spirit is immeasurable, inapprehensible, beyond conception, never born, beyond reasoning, beyond thought. His vastness is the vastness of space. At the end of the worlds, while all things sleep, He alone is awake in eternity. Then, from His infinity, new worlds arise and awake, a universe, which is an immensity of thought. The universe exists in the Consciousness of Brahman, and unto Him it returns."

This is an authentic representation of the Truth as It is seen in the mystical vision. All that Prajapati says here is correct and absolutely true; I add my verification to these declarations, for whatever it's worth, as one who has also realized their truth for himself. In the mystical experience of unity, the outflowing and returning of the universal manifestation is a recurring cycle. It is similar to the inhalation and exhalation of a breath, which we, as humans, experience. This is the truth. One may search through all the accounts of all the mystics and find this same description given.

Apparently, the angels were completely satisfied with what Prajapati said about the supreme Spirit, for now they changed the subject, and questioned him about the individualized soul. "Master," the angel-spokesman said,

"You have spoken to us of the greatness of the Self (*Atman*), but what is the soul (*jiva*) who is bound by the good or bad effects of actions (*karmas*), and who, born again from these good or bad actions, rises or falls in its wanderings, under the sway of duality?"

Prajapati replies:

"Yes, there is indeed a soul, composed of the elements¹, who is bound by the good or bad effects of actions, and who, born again from these good or bad effects, rises or falls in its wanderings under the sway of duality. This human soul is under the power of Nature (*Prakrti*) and its conditions, and thus it falls into confusion. Because of this confusion, the soul cannot become conscious of the God who dwells within, and whose power gives us the power to act. The soul is thus whirled along the rushing, muddy, stream of Nature, and becomes unsteady and uncertain. It is filled with confusion and full of desires, without concentration, and agitated with pride. Whenever the soul has thoughts of "I" and "mine," it binds itself to a limited sense of selfhood, a limited identity, just as a bird is bound in the net of a snare."

Prajapati is saying that the Self alone exists in truth; It is the absolute Reality. However, the Self has projected an imagined, illusory, reality ("an immensity of thought") known as *Maya* or *Prakrti*, in which the human *soul* exists. And, as the one Spirit is thus self-limited in an individual soul-form in this mirage, It loses the sense of Its all-pervasiveness, Its infinity, and becomes identified with that particular human form. Swayed by the conditions of Nature in which It finds Itself

immersed, It imagines needs and desires, and becomes lost in imaginary justifications for Its action. Having lost all sense of Its unlimited Divinity, It feels enslaved and bound by Nature, which is truly Its own manifestation. Prajapati goes on to say:

"The mind of man is of two kinds: pure and impure. It is impure when in the bondage of desire, and pure when free from [worldly] desire... This entire world-illusion (*samsara*) takes place in one's own mind. Let one therefore keep the mind pure, for *as a man thinks, so he becomes*. This is the eternal mystery."

There is a very old story, which is meant to illustrate this proclivity of the Divine Self to place Itself in such an imaginary bondage; it involves the god, Indra, and the god, Shiva. It seems that, one day, Indra became bored with all the pleasures afforded him in heaven, and he decided to experience life on earth in the body of a pig. He found himself a large mud-hole, and he began snorting and cavorting in the mud as a pig. And he found so much pleasure in this pig-life that he mated with a sow, and he fathered a large litter of piglets. His life was very happy; he had his cool mud to lie in, and he had a mate and a lot of squealing piglets to fondly care for, and he was quite content.

Now, the other gods became upset when they learned that Indra had let all the affairs of heaven fall by the wayside while he enjoyed life as a pig on earth. So, they sent Shiva to persuade Indra to return to his rightful place in heaven. Indra refused, however; and told Shiva to mind his own business, that he was very happy where he was, thank you. Shiva tried again and again, with the same result. Finally, Shiva, in desperation, took his trident and split the pig-body of Indra from one end to the other, releasing Indra from his pitiful delusion. Immediately, Indra let out a sigh of joyful relief that he had been freed from bondage to the simple desires and satisfactions of his pig-life; and he expressed his gratitude to Shiva and the other gods too for bringing him out of that pitiable state.

We too, Prajapati is telling us, are God; we are the Divine Self of the universe. But, through becoming deluded by *Maya*, we have come to believe that we are poor, limited, finite forms whose only satisfaction is in the pitiable pleasures of the flesh. We are in the same condition as Indra in the story. Our minds keep on having dreams and fantasies without end. No matter how many times a desire is fulfilled, the mind goes on increasing desires instead of diminishing them. The mind causes you to forget your true nature, and makes you think you're something else; but you must not be fooled. The mind may go on creating universes upon universes; So what? Let it! Continue to remain in serenity, witnessing it. For

those who have no understanding, it is the devil. But, for one who understands the nature of the mind, it is only the creative effulgence, the unceasing play, of the Divine Energy. This is what Prajapati says:

"The mind is indeed the source of bondage; but it is also the source of liberation. To be bound to the things of this world: this is bondage. To be free from them: this is liberation. Indeed, if men thought of God as much as they think of the world, who would not attain liberation?"

After this, Prajapati explained to the angels how to meditate on the one divine Self:

"When a wise man has withdrawn his mind from all external things, and when he is no longer attentive even to inner sensations, let him rest in peace, free from the movements of will and desire. Since the soul has come from That which is greater than itself, let it surrender to its Source. For it has been said, 'There is something beyond our mind which abides in silence within our mind. It is the supreme Mystery beyond thought.' Let one's mind and one's subtle body rest upon that and not rest on anything else.

"When the mind is silent, beyond weakness or distraction, then it can enter into a world, which is far beyond the mind; that is the highest state. ... As a fire without fuel finds peace in its source, when thoughts become silent, the soul finds peace in its own Source. And when a mind, which longs for Truth finds the peace of its own Source, then those false inclinations cease which were the result of former actions done in the delusion of the senses. A quiet mind overcomes both good and evil actions; in quietude, the soul is one with the Self. Then one knows the joy of eternity. As water becomes one with water, fire with fire, and air with air, so the mind becomes one with the infinite Mind, and thus attains final freedom."

This is the teaching of all the ancient scriptures and all the seers of God. See how similar, for example, is the teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita* on this subject:

"When all desires are in peace, and the mind, gathering all the wayward senses, turns them within, then, with reason armed with a strong will, let the seeker quietly lead the mind into the Self, and let all his thoughts be stilled.

"And whenever the unsteady and restless mind strays away from the Self, let him always lead it again and again to the Self. Supreme joy

thereby comes to the yogi whose heart is stilled, whose passions are quieted, who is pure from sin; for he becomes one with Brahman." ²

Prajapati says:

"Words cannot describe the joy of the soul whose impurities are cleansed away in deep contemplation, who is one with the *Atman*, his own Self. Only those who experience this joy know what it is."

That is the end of Prajapati's speech, and the end of the *Maitri Upanishad*. Its message, though, has continued through the centuries, and is reflected in countless scriptures and scriptural treatises. Listen, for example, to this affirmation of its message from the *Ashtavakra samhita*, in which Ashtavakra tells his disciple, king Janaka:

"You are neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor air, nor ether; these are but the elements of which all created forms are made. In order to attain liberation, know the Self as the witness of all these; you are Consciousness itself. If you detach your identification from the body, and rest in Consciousness, you will at once be happy, peaceful and free from bondage. You are the one observer of all and you are always liberated. In fact, it is only your imagining yourself to be other than the one observer that constitutes your bondage. One who considers himself free is, in fact, free; and one who considers himself bound remains bound. "*As one thinks, so one becomes*" is a popular saying in this world—and it is very true. The Self is all pervading, perfect, pure Consciousness; It is One, free, actionless, unattached, desireless and quiet. It is the Witness. It is only through delusion that it appears to be an individual entity." ³

Meditation

When the storm-clouds of oppression and darkness loom all around you, and the gathering winds sweep the contents of your mind into a swirling chaos of confusion, do not be afraid—be firm, be confident! For after the storm, the Sun will reappear, and calm will reign over all, and there will shine forth on you the clearest and most pleasant weather.

And when the melancholy of autumn turns into the bleak, cold, harshness of winter, and all seems empty, dreary, and void of life; and when your soul cries out in agony for some sign that the Spirit of God still lives and loves, do not lose your hold on faith—be firm, be confident! For after the winter comes the spring, and

life that seemed long dead revives with all the exuberance of a rekindled love or a newborn child, and life's joy reawakens to fill the earth once more with song.

And when night's shadows fall across the landscape of your heart, and, though straining to see, your eyes can find no glimmer of light, nor even the slightest movement of hope within the darkness of your mind, but only the shadowy specter of fear that somewhere close, unseen, lies the pit of unremitting despair; don't be afraid—be firm, be confident! For after the night comes the dawn, and the bright clarity of day, wherein is seen the truth that you are free as air, and never touched by night or day, or foul or fair weather, or the changing of the seasons; but, as they come and go in their unceasing rounds, you remain, the one pure Sky, the unblinking Eye of Consciousness, who watches light and shadow alternate in this, your own spectacular play.

NOTES:

1. Before the advent of science, and the discovery of atomic structure, learned men of both East and West believed that everything was made of a combination of five primary elements: earth, air, fire, water, and ether. But today we know, of course, that none of these are elements, but each consists of combinations of various elements.
2. *Bhagavad Gita*, 6:24-31.
3. *Ashtavakra Samhita*

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5. What Should Be The Life Of A True Religious Person (from *Thomas á Kempis: On The Love of God*, 1991)¹

It behooves you to break your own will in many things if you will have peace and concord with others. It is no little thing to be in monasteries or in congregations, to continue there without complaining or gainsaying, and faithfully to persevere there unto the end. Blessed are they who live there well and make a good end. If you will stand surely in grace and much profit in virtue, hold yourself as an exile and as a pilgrim here in this life, and be glad, for the love of God, to be held in the world as a fool and a vile person, as you are.

The donning of religious clothing helps little, but the changing of life and the mortifying of passions makes a person perfectly and truly religious. He who seeks any other thing in religion than God and the health of his soul, shall find nothing

there but trouble and sorrow; and he may not stand long there in peace and quietness who does not labor to be least and subject to all.

It is good, therefore, that you remember often that you came to religion to serve, and not to be served, and that you are called thither to suffer and to labor, and not to be idle nor to tell vain tales. In religion a man shall be proved as gold in a furnace, and no man may stand long there in grace and virtue unless he will, with all his heart, humble himself for the love of God.

NOTE:

1. Thomas á Kempis, *On The Love of God*, Book One, Chapter XV, ed. by Swami Abhayananda, Olympia, Washington, Atma Books, 1992, pp. 33-34.

* * *

6. The Way of God

(8-4-14)

It is a great marvel to me that, despite the fact that we are all the embodiments of the Divine, of God Himself, the most predominant trait of all human beings is that they so hatefully despise each other, and constantly criticize and seek to harm one another. Equally astounding is the fact that each person thinks that everyone but themselves is suffering from this disease, and that they themselves are immune to it. But this is your malady and mine! This is your sickness and mine. We can blame it on the ego that afflicts us—but no one can defeat that ego but ourselves; no one but you, and you, and you, and me.

We are the embodiment of God's unflagging and undivided love! Why then don't we enforce our minds to think and act accordingly? Unfortunately, we have seen too many examples of evil, of tyranny, or inhuman cruelty in this world that, but for the critical perspective of a few, would have gone unbridled and unchecked. We have learned, therefore, to look with a critical eye at the activities of others, but we do so at the expense of our broader vision of a divine world. We are all seeking to know the truth, and we are all—even the holiest among us—capable of making mistakes, capable of blindness and error. And each of us is worthy of tolerance and forgiveness. This is the way of God, who contains and embraces all His children—those lost or otherwise. And it is an example we do well to follow.

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7. On The Alteration of Grace ¹

(The following excerpts are from Thomas á Kempis: On The Love of God, Book II, Chapter VII. Of The Visiting Of Grace)

When the grace of God comes to a man, then he is made mighty and strong to do everything that belongs to virtue; and when grace withdraws, then he is made weak and feeble to do any good deed, and is, as it were, left only to pain and punishments. And, if it happens so with you, yet despair not overmuch therefore and leave not your good deeds undone but stand always strongly in obedience to the will of God and turn all things that shall come to you to the laud and praising of His name. For after winter comes summer, and after the night comes the day, and after a great tempest shows again very clear and pleasant weather.

Chapter VIII. Of The Wanting Of All Solace And Comfort

It is no great thing to despise man's comfort when the comfort of God is present. But it is a great thing, and that a very great thing, that a man should be so strong in spirit that he may bear the wanting of them both; and for the love of God and to His honor should have a ready will to bear, as it were, a desolation of spirit, and yet in nothing to seek himself nor his own merits.

What proof of virtue is it, if a man is merry and devout in God when grace comes and visits the soul, for that hour is desired by every creature? He rides very safely whom the grace of God bears and supports; and what marvel is it, if he feels no burden who is borne up by Him who is almighty, and led by the sovereign guide who is God Himself? We are always glad to have solace and consolation; but we would have no tribulation, and we will not readily cast from us the false love of ourselves.

It behooves a man to fight long, and mightily to strive with himself, before he shall learn fully to overcome himself, and freely and readily set all his desires in God. When a man loves himself and much trusts to himself, he falls immediately to man's comforts. But the very true lover of God and the diligent follower of virtue falls not so easily to them; he seeks little such sensible sweetness and bodily delights, but rather is glad to suffer great hard labors and pain for the love of God.

Nevertheless, when spiritual comfort is sent to you of God, take it meekly and give thanks humbly for it. But know for certain that it is of the great goodness of God

that it is sent to you, and not of your deserving. And see that you are not lifted up therefore unto pride, nor that you joy much thereof, nor presume vainly therein, but rather that you be the more meek for so noble a gift, and the more watchful and fearful in all your works; for that time will pass away, and the time of temptation will shortly follow after. When comfort is withdrawn, despair not therefore, but meekly and patiently await the visitation of God, for He is able and of sufficient power to give you more grace and more spiritual comfort than you had first.

Such alteration of grace is no new thing, and no strange thing to those who have had experience in the way of God; for in all great saints and in all lovers of God similar alteration has often been found. Wherefore the Psalmist, when he had abundance of spiritual comfort, said to our Lord that he trusted he should never be removed from such comfort. But after, when grace withdrew, he said: "O Lord, Thou hast withdrawn Thy spiritual comforts from me and I am left in great trouble and heaviness."

Yet nevertheless he despaired not therefor, but prayed heartily unto our Lord, and said: "I shall busily cry to Thee, Lord, and I shall meekly pray to Thee for grace and comfort." And immediately he had the effect of his prayer, as he witnesses himself, saying: "Our Lord hath heard my prayer, and hath had mercy on me, and hath now again sent me His help and spiritual comfort." And, therefore, he said afterwards: "Lord, Thou hast turned my sorrow into joy, and Thou hast encompassed me with heavenly gladness."

If almighty God has done thus with holy saints, it is not for us, weak and feeble persons, to despair, though we sometimes have fervor of spirit, and are sometimes left cold and void of devotion. The Spirit comes and goes according to His pleasure, and therefore Job said: "Lord, Thou graciously visitest Thy lover in the morning, that is to say, in the time of comfort; and suddenly Thou provest him in withdrawing such comforts from him."

Wherein then may I trust, or in whom may I have any confidence, but only in the great endless grace and mercy of God? For the company of good men and the fellowship of devout brethren and faithful friends, the possession of holy books or of devout treatises, the hearing of sweet songs or of devout hymns, may little avail, and bring forth but little comfort to the soul when we are left to our own frailty and poverty. And when we are so left, there is no better remedy than patience, with a whole resigning of our own will to the will of God.

Chapter IX.
Of Yielding Thanks To God
For His Manifold Graces

Why do you seek rest here, since you are born to labor? Dispose yourself to patience rather than to comforts, to penance rather than to gladness. What temporal man would not gladly have spiritual comforts if he might always keep them? For spiritual comforts exceed by far all worldly delights and all bodily pleasures. All worldly delights are either foul or vain; but spiritual delights are only joyful and true, brought forth by virtues and sent by God into a pure soul. But such comforts no man may have whenever he wishes, for the time of temptation follows swiftly after.

The false liberty of will and the inordinate trust that we have to ourselves is much contrary to the heavenly visitations. Our Lord does well in sending such comforts, but we do not well when we yield not all thanks therefor to Him again. The greatest cause why the gifts of grace may not readily come to us is that we are ungrateful to the Giver and yield not thanks to Him from whom all goodness comes. Grace is always given to them who are ready to yield thanks for it again, and therefore it is more likely given to the meek and taken from the proud.

I would have none of that consolation that should take from me compunction! And I would have none of that contemplation that should lift my soul into presumption! Every high thing in man's sight is not holy; every desire is not clean and pure; every sweet thing is not good; all that is dear to man is not always pleasant to God. We shall therefore gladly take such gifts as make us readier to forsake ourselves and our own will.

He who knows the comforts that come through the gift of grace and knows also how sharp and painful the absenting of grace is, shall not dare think that any goodness comes of himself; but he shall openly confess that of himself he is very poor and naked of all virtue. Yield therefore to God that which is His, and to yourself that which is your own; that is, thank God for His manifold graces and blame yourself for your offences. Hold in you always a sure foundation of meekness, and then the highness of virtue shall shortly be given unto you; for the high tower of virtue may not long stand unless it is borne up with the low foundation of meekness.

Those who are greatest in virtue are least in their own sight; and the more glorious they are, the meeker they are in themselves, full of truth and of heavenly joy, not desirous of any vainglory or praising of man. Also, those who are fully established

and confirmed in God may in no way be lifted up unto pride. They who ascribe all goodness to God seek neither glory nor vain praisings in the world. They covet only to joy and to be glorified in God, and desire in heart that He may be honored, lauded, and praised, above all things, both in Himself and all His saints; and that is always the thing that perfect men most desire to bring about.

Be loving and thankful to God for the least benefit that He gives you, and then you shall be the better prepared and the more worthy to receive of Him greater benefits. Think the least gift that He gives is great; and the most despicable things take as special gifts and as great tokens of love. For if the greatness of the Giver is well considered, no gift that He gives shall seem little.

It is no little thing that is given by God, for though He send pain and sorrow, we should take them gladly and thankfully, since all that He allows to come unto us is for our spiritual health. If a man desire to hold the grace of God, let him be kind, and thankful for such grace as he has received, and patient when it is withdrawn; let him pray devoutly that it may shortly come again, and then let him be meek and humble in spirit, so that he lose it not through his presumption and pride of heart.

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NOTE:

1. Excerpts from Thomas á Kempis, *On The Love of God*, edited by Swami Abhayananda, Book II, Chapters VII-IX, pp. 50-55.)

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8. Self-Reliance (11-21-14)

For spiritual aspirants, there is a great deal to be said for living in a focused spiritual environment such as a monastery, ashram, or temple; but oftentimes a life so lived is at the cost of one's intellectual and moral freedom, and this is detrimental. To limit oneself to a specific tradition, with determined hierarchies and specific unquestionable narratives, is always detrimental to the freedom of thought. And if that tradition demands an unswerving devotion, not to the divinity within you, but to the words and divine authority of some book or historical person, so much more is the limitation and the detriment.

Of course, living unprotected in the world is dangerous also. There are many temptations to avoid, and the peace required for meditation and contemplation is hard to find. Also, the absence of the companionship of like-minded souls makes for a lonely existence. But, it seems to me, that despite the loneliness and the hardship, an earnest soul has the strength, courage and inner resources to forge a spiritual life in the world. She finds companionship in the presence of God and knows the added advantage of living free of confining restrictions to her intellectual and moral freedom.

I am a great believer in freedom, and therefore recommend to all spiritual aspirants the path of independence, non-affiliation, and self-rule, which allows freedom to evolve. Even if conforming to the herd appeals to your desire for belonging to a community or for the possible attainment of some measure of authority; resist it; be your own master—even if it means you must deal with some loneliness and struggle. The greatest attainment is freedom—the freedom to give your heart entirely to God within you, and to think and act in accord with the dictates of your own divine Self. At the end of a long and productive life, nothing will savor so sweetly to you as the satisfaction of being and having been wholly true to your Self.

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9. I Have Given Sweets That Decay (3-22-2016)

In the gracious revelation given on November 18, 1966, the Lord said:

“I have given sweets that decay to those that crave them;
I have given my wealth unto the poor and lonely.
My hands are open; nothing is concealed.” ¹

In this brief exposition, He explains that all that He offers is displayed openly, and that it is we who must choose. In the one hand lies the material world and all that’s in it—the delights of the flesh, and all the luxurious objects that appeal to the senses. You may choose this if you wish, but understand that it provides but a momentary satisfaction, and that all these ‘sweets’ will rapidly decay and vanish, leaving you with nothing.

In God’s other hand lay all His true wealth: the blissful awareness of His all-embracing presence. If you choose this, you must renounce self-interest, and become His instrument; you must make His will your own. This bestows a wealth of happiness that only the blessed of heaven know. For when you give over your individual self to Him, you become Him. Then all the riches of heaven and earth are your own.

Why is His divine wealth given only to the poor and lonely? Because the self-interested pursuit of worldly wealth and the freedom to attend to God are mutually opposed to one another. Poverty is not in itself a necessity, but for one who has renounced self-interest, whose mind is busy solely with the things of God, and whose heart longs only for the company of God, some degree of poverty and solitude become likely and welcome companions.

The true poverty of the saints, the poverty to be embraced, is not the poverty of goods at one’s disposal, but a poverty of distractions, poverty of concerns, poverty of worldly responsibilities—so that one is free to attend to the responsibility of remaining conscious of the Divinity in oneself and in serving that Divinity in the world. To be poor in the world’s wealth is no virtue if there is no devotion to God; the true poverty is to be poor in needs, having but one need only: to be aware of the presence of the Divine at every moment. A lack of necessities will not make you holy, but a lack of desires will make you free. With no other goal or wish but to serve as God’s instrument, a man becomes a millionaire.

The poverty that acquiesces to indolence and squalor is ugly and demeaning to man; but that poverty which is undertaken for the sake of contemplating the Divine essence of the soul and serving as its instrument is very beautiful and praiseworthy, and much to be desired. It is such as these who are the blessed poor. It is they who shall inherit not only the earth but the infinite cosmos; and they shall live throughout their days in the wakeful knowledge of God's sweet presence.

NOTE:

1. Some might feel that this statement is unjustifiable; but they are the words of the Divine Self, not mine. Quoted from 'The Song of The Self' in my book, *The Supreme Self*, Atma Books, Fallsburg, N.Y., 1984.

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10. How To Meditate On The Self (7-2-2015)

First, we must ask ourselves what is this Self on which we are going to meditate? The answer to this question, which we find in the Upanishads, is,

“The Self is the Witness of the mind. ...It is not the thought, but the Thinker one must know. It is not what is seen that should be known, but it is the Seer which must be known.”

This, of course, is why the Self is so hard to get a handle on; we are used to tackling the task of “knowing” by focusing on the object to be known, but, in this case, it is the knowing Subject, which we are attempting to know. It is the Ground, the very Consciousness that is the background of knowing, the Screen, as it were, on which the thought-images appear.

To make matters even more difficult, this Self has no qualities, no characteristics whatsoever by which one is able to describe It. It is as empty and as uncharacterizable as the vastness of the sky. It is the Source of everything that exists, but It is, Itself, nothing—void. It is called by the Vedantists: “*Sat-chit-ananda*.” It does not exist; It *is* Existence (*Sat*). It is not conscious; It *is* Consciousness (*Chit*), unstained, unwavering, eternal. It is perfect, unchallenged Freedom, since It alone is; and for that reason, It does not feel bliss; It *is* Bliss (*Ananda*). We, who are manifestations of that Satchidananda, are not different

from It. Our body, our physical existence, is That; we can experience our oneness with the universal Energy. We can know It as Consciousness—the very consciousness that is our self-awareness, the silent Witness of all our various states of mind. When we come to realize that we are That, that we are none other than the one, undivided Reality, then we experience the infinite, carefree Freedom that is devoid of any obstacle, or any *other*; then we experience the Bliss.

Another way of understanding the Self is by examining the physical, the mental, and the spiritual aspects of our own reality. We possess a body, we experience a mind, and we are spirit—i.e., the Self. And we identify sometimes with one aspect of our being, and at other times with another aspect of our being. This is clearly illustrated in a story, which appears in the famous Indian epic, called the *Ramayana*. In it, a character, Rama, who represents the eternal Self, has a monkey-servant, named Hanuman, who represents the mind or intellect. At one point, Rama asks Hanuman, “How do you regard me?” And Hanuman replies, “When I regard myself as the body, I’m your servant; when I regard myself as a soul, I’m a part of you; but when I regard myself as the universal Self, then I am one with you.”

Now, a great truth is pointed out in this saying of Hanuman’s: namely that our relationship to God, and our spiritual practice as well, is entirely dependent upon how we regard ourselves, upon what we believe ourselves to be. Because there are these different ways of thinking of oneself, there are also differences in the way one might approach God, the eternal Self. Notice that, in the first two ways in which Hanuman identifies himself, there is a separation between the subject and the object of reverence. Whether identifying himself with the body or the soul, Hanuman regards himself as having a separate identity from Rama. In the one case, he relates to Rama as a servant, and in the second, he relates to Rama as a part to a whole; but in the third case, there is no separation, no relationship: Hanuman sees himself as not different from Rama.

And so, as we have seen, there are these three different attitudes regarding not only God, but one’s own identity as well. Basically, however, there are only the two different approaches to God: (1) as an individualized identity (ego) separate from the supreme Identity, or God; and (2) as pure Consciousness, identical with God, the supreme Self. Let’s look more closely at these two approaches, or methods, for they are found to be the methods adhered to in every single religious tradition: some adhering to the one, some adhering to the other, accounting for the apparent incompatibility of the various religious traditions.

In the path of the separate individual soul, the relationship of the soul to God is as the relationship of a thought to the mind from which it sprang, or as the relationship of a wave to the ocean from which it rises, or as the relationship of a ray of light to the Sun from which it streams. The wave wishes to be dissolved back into the oneness of the Ocean; the thought wishes to be dissolved back into the one mind; the ray wishes to be reabsorbed back into the pure source of all light. These are some of the metaphors used to describe the relationship of the soul to God. And in each of these cases, there is a distinction between the part and the whole. The ray experiences its separateness from the Sun; the thought feels isolated from the mind; the wave wonders, “Where is my father, the ocean?” None of these is really separate from its source, of course; but the *sense* of separation is there. Each *feels* separate and apart from its originating principle, and it will not be satisfied until it becomes fully aware of its oneness with its source.

We, as souls, are in the same fix. We are not truly separate from our eternal Self; but, so long as we are not aware of our infinite and eternal Identity, we suffer, and go on seeking ways to become aware of our Source, our real Self. Until we do, we cannot feel complete and fulfilled. Even though, ultimately, this separation of the soul from its source is purely imaginary, still, it is real so long as we suffer the pains and anxieties accompanying this imaginary plight.

So, what to do? The soul turns all its attention to the Self. It loves the Self as a child loves its father or mother. It longs for the embrace of the Self as a lover longs for her beloved. It offers all its thoughts and actions in the service of the Self, as a devoted servant offers himself to his master. A soul endeavors to close the gap between itself and its God by setting aside time to think lovingly on the Self. To wash away all other distracting thoughts, it continually sings in its heart its mantra: the name of the beloved Self. It sings songs of love, it prays, it meditates, it languishes, it agonizes, it becomes pathetic.

At last, all the clouds of ego, or error, are dispersed, and the bright light of the Sun shines through; the Self reveals Itself resplendently in the consciousness-sky of the soul; and the soul cries out: “O my God! I am you and you are me! All along, there has only been this one Mind, playing the game of ‘I’ and ‘Thou.’” The ray realizes it is only sunlight, and has never been apart from its true self, the Sun; the thought-image realizes it is nothing but mind, and it has never been separate from the mind; the wave realizes it is only ocean, and has never been separate from the ocean.

That is the way of the soul, the way of *bhakti*, or “devotion.” It is also called the

way of duality, because, in this path, there are two: the soul and the Self—until, of course, the soul is graced with the realization that it is, and has always been, none other than the Self.

There is another pathway, however: that way that is mentioned by Hanuman when he said, “When I identify with you, then you and I are one.” This is the way of non-Duality, or Unity. It is also referred to as the path of *jnan*, or “knowledge.” This path takes as its starting-point the knowledge that the soul is none other than the Self, that nothing else exists but that One, and the meditation on the Self is therefore devoid of any relationship such as exists on the path of *bhakti*, or devotion. There is no babbling of the soul crying out, “O Lord, O Lord! Pity me, Thy poorest and most worthless servant!” No, not at all. Nondual meditation is the absolutely silent awareness by the Self of Itself.

But how, you may wonder, is it possible to experience the Self by the Self? What is one to do with the exuberantly effusive mind? Does one continually repeat in one’s mind, “I am the Self! I am the Self!”? No. The method of mantra repetition is helpful, and even necessary, in the early stages of devotional practice; but, in the path of nondual meditation, it is not helpful. Certainly, repetition of a mantra is the way to occupy the mind and force it to pay attention to one single thought to the exclusion of all else, but nondual meditation is intended to go beyond the process of thought. The Self is pure Consciousness, absolute Awareness; does it make sense then for one who wishes to experience this awareness to give it a name and call out to it? This is like painting the words, “blank wall,” on a wall in order to reveal the blankness of the wall; or like using black paint to color a house white. The active thought-producing mind is exactly that which stands in the way of your awareness of the Self. To use it to produce even more thought-forms is not the way to become aware of the Self. It is like flashing more and more words on a screen instructing you to look only at the screen until the screen cannot be seen at all.

How, then, does one meditate in the nondual path, the path of *jnan*? In this path, the awareness is not focused on some *other*, such as a God, or some Divine form or mental image, but rather on one’s own being. It is an inward turning of the awareness, so that it is focused upon itself. That is the state of a mind in meditation on the Self. The Shaivite scripture, *Vijnana Bhairava*, says, “Meditation is not concentrating on a form. True meditation consists of uninterrupted awareness, without any image or support.”

Here is an exercise for meditation: Concentrate on the sound of your own breath,

as it comes in and goes out. Draw the breath in with the sound, *So*. Release the breath out with the sound, *Ham*. As you breathe, the *prana* (the subtle breath) is drawn upward, through the spinal column, the cervical vertebra, and into the cranial region. Consciously draw the breath all the way to the top of the head. As you exhale, feel the *prana* descend down the front of the head, neck, chest, abdomen, and to the perineum, from whence it ascends on the next inhalation. Feel the muscles of the perineum contract as the new subtle breath is drawn upward. As you breathe in, allow the diaphragm to relax outward for maximum breath intake, and expand the soft palate so that the air rushing upward makes a jet-like sound inwardly and causes your inner ears to pop. It may be that your breath will comfortably remain suspended upward for quite a while; or it may remain suspended *after* you have exhaled. Or, after breathing in this way for a while, your breath may become very shallow, and spontaneously cease, becoming balanced in perfect stillness. In such a state, consciousness becomes focused and clear, and it is possible that the Self will reveal Itself.

Concentrate on this process and think of nothing else. Aspire to lift your consciousness to the crown of the head, while breathing in with the sound, *So*, and out with the sound, *Ham*. This is the famous *Hamsah* mantra, which is sounded as *So-ham*. The phrase, *So-ham*, consists of two Sanskrit words: *Sah*, “That,” and *aham*, “I am.” Let its meaning permeate your awareness as you rise into the light at the crown of your head. Become aware, “I am That!”

Aspiration, whether it is the longing for God, or for the realization of the Self, lifts the consciousness above the ego-involved mind. Just as, on a mountaintop, the air becomes thinner and purer, so, as the mind focuses its intent upward toward the supreme Consciousness, it transcends the hill-country of deliberate thought, and enters the high atmosphere of pure Spirit, where reigns the silence of the clear blue sky of sweetness, peace, and light.

There, no world, no thought, exists; from the top of the mountain, the gaze is fixed upward, into the silver, silent sky of God, or the Self. That is meditation. And if, from there, we are drawn inside His mystery, above that sky, to know His perfect identity in ourselves, then that is His most wonderful Grace. If not, we nonetheless absorb from that sky some of the radiance of His Light, some of the nectar of Self-awareness, to keep in our minds and hearts; and we offer thanks to Him and pray for His continued presence in our conscious life.

By repeated practice, we learn to identify more and more with the witnessing Self, and less and less with the thought-activity of the mind; and the various habitual

traits of the mind have less and less power to uproot us from our natural peace. Meditation is not meant only for those times when one is formally “sitting”; meditation is really a state of awareness that can be stretched to include all of one’s time, during all of one’s activities.

During the time of sitting, the mind is filled with the blissful awareness of the Self; this is the practice of Truth. As that practice permeates our awareness more and more, it will be carried into more and more of our active life as well. Listen to what the great 13th century mystic, Jnaneshvar, who had wholly incorporated Self-awareness into his life, had to say about this:

"One who has drunk of the nectar of Self-awareness may say whatever he likes; his silent contemplation remains undisturbed. His state of actionlessness remains unaffected—even though he performs countless actions.¹ Whether he walks in the crowded streets or remains sitting in his room, he is always at home. His “rule of conduct” is his own sweet will. His meditation is whatever he happens to be doing."²

Now, there are times when, as a soul, you will feel the desire for God, as a lover for her beloved. The love in your heart will bubble up to express itself as devotion to the Lord of the universe. This is the noblest and best path for the soul, to focus on God within itself with true humility and love, in simple prayer and worship. Even after the supreme realization that your true Self is the universal Self, still you will joy in the singing of His name, and in serving Him in all His creatures and in remembering His presence at every moment in every place.

And there will also be times when you will become intensely focused and quiet, and your breathing will become shallow and soft, and you will taste something of the certainty of your eternal and limitless Selfhood. And you will rest in that quietude, that solitary joyfulness—without thought, without movement, aware only of your own infinite presence.

Because the one Reality is both subject and object, both the personal soul and the Impersonal Self, both the manifest and the Unmanifest, and because both of these aspects are contained within man, both of these paths, or methods, of Self-awareness are perfectly valid and equally true. Just as a ray of sunlight is both distinguishable from and also identical with the Sun; as a thought-image is both distinguishable from and yet identical with the mind; as a wave is at once distinguishable from and yet identical with the ocean; we too are both distinguishable from and identical to that one Self. Whether we turn to It as

particularized souls, or as Consciousness to Itself, we are looking toward the one Light.

We should come to understand ourselves so well that we can worship God with heartfelt love at one moment and know Him as non-different from ourselves at another moment, and not feel the slightest contradiction in so doing. This whole world of creation is God's, and it is also Himself. If God in the form of His creature lovingly worships God, the Creator, the inner Controller, the Self—who is going to object? Once again, listen to Jnaneshvar:

"Everything is contained in the being of God. If a desire for the Master-servant relationship arises, it is God alone who must supply both out of Himself. Even the devotional practices, such as repetition of God's name, faith and meditation, are not different from God. Therefore, God must worship God with God, in one way or another." ³

"...God Himself is the devotee; the Goal has become the path [in order to enjoy the journey]. The whole universe is one solitary Being. It is He who becomes a God, and He who becomes a devotee. Yet, in Himself, He enjoys the kingdom of utter Stillness." ⁴

I'd like to say a few words about the benefits of meditation: Everyone knows that it is through meditation that we are able to know the Self; but there are also many side benefits. Peace of mind lends itself very beneficially to health of body. When the mind becomes focused on God, and all your energies are focused upward, the brain becomes infused with energy and the light of Consciousness. Whatever you focus on in your daily endeavors will be illumined by the increased clarity and intensity of your intellect, and you will easily find solutions to all your problems. You won't need to jog ten miles to feel healthy. Just by raising that conscious Light within your body, you will feel like a god. And you will radiate that light of health to all around you.

According to the *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, the first fruits of meditation are: "health, little waste matter, and a clear complexion; lightness of body, a pleasant scent, and a sweet voice; also an absence of greedy desires." ⁵ But, above all, of course, meditation enables one to become centered in the eternal Self; to rise above all the vicissitudes of life, and to remain established in peace and goodwill, attuned to the inner joy of the Eternal, while seeing the one God in all creation.

Here are a few suggestions to those who may be new to meditation:

First, find a convenient time for your regular practice. In the Vedantic tradition, the times for meditation are spoken of as the *brahmamuhurta*, the times just after the Sun goes down and just before the Sun comes up. Most people find it difficult to meditate during the brightest of the daylight hours, as at those times the mind and body are most inclined to activity.

Second, have a regular place in which to meditate where it's quiet and you will be undisturbed. Sit in a comfortable position. Yogic texts recommend various postures, but always insist on a straight spine, so that the subtle energy (*prana*) may flow freely to the head.

Third, the length of time for sitting will vary with the depth of your practice. Beginners and even long-time practitioners may find it difficult to concentrate intensely for longer than one hour.

Fourth, don't let the mind just wander; you will only get into bad habits that will be difficult to break. Use one of the two methods or paths, which I talked about. If you're able to sit peacefully, absorbed in the Self, by all means do so. But when, because of the forces of nature, which are always in flux, your mind becomes very active or agitated, then put it to work singing God's name. Be very strict with your mind. Tell it, "Please sing God's name with love, O my mind! Please chant His name with a voice that is sweet with love!" If you try to quiet your mind by force of will, it will only become more agitated and antagonistic. But, if you lead it gently toward God with love, it will rush to bathe in the sweetness of devotion. It will quickly soar with emotion to the heights of Divinity and become absorbed in God.

Fifth, whatever you do, never become disgusted with yourself—not even in a dream! Always respect your Self. Love your Self. Contemplate your Self. Your Lord lives within you as you. Never forget that you are the Divine Self of all, ever-free, ever-blissful, the One in all.

Meditation

O my Lord, Father of the universe! Let me put aside all thoughts and concerns, all activities of the body or mind, and let me sit silently in Thy presence. Let my mind be stilled in adoration and let all voices within me be stilled. Thy language of intimacy is silence, for my soul most nearly approaches Thy state when it is silent. O Father, conform my mind to Thy peace. Still me in Thy calming glance. Rest

me in Thy cradling wings. Dissolve me in Thyself.

How wonderful, Lord, is Thy stillness!! In quietude, I know fulfillment. In nothingness, I know release. How good Thou art, O God of gods, to rest me in Thy peace, to grant me from within this taste of Thee, of Thy bliss. What a great wonder it is that I can find Thee and touch Thee and enjoy Thee when I am empty and still! How happy this, Thy silent, laughing Self!

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NOTES:

1. Jnaneshvar, *Amritanubhav*, 9:20-21; Abhayananda, 1989, p. 207.
2. *Ibid.*, 9:31, 34; p. 208.
3. *Ibid.*, 9:38-41; p. 209.
4. *Ibid.*, 9:35-36; pp. 208-209.
5. *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, 3:12.

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11. Sex And Spirituality (5-16-2015)

Once again, a representative of the noble line of *sannyasins* appears in the newspaper headlines as a serial sexual exploiter of his female students! The warnings of the past seem to have had no effect. For my own part, I learned long ago of the increased moral danger present in the environment of a spiritual community, where the spiritual authority of the teacher meets with a constant proximity of adoring young females. The danger, the overwhelming risk, this presents is to the teacher's own character, his own spiritual welfare, for we all tend to underestimate our vulnerability in this area. A swami or any other spiritual representative is first of all a man, and a man, like all creatures, is biologically programmed to engage in reproductive activity. He may struggle mightily against these biological promptings, but they are certainly operating there within him nonetheless. In situations where a man has spiritual authority over a number of young women, such as in an ashram or other cloistered spiritual community, there

is a special need for extreme caution. Witness the strict discipline which priests and nuns are under in Christian monastic communities.

And yet, despite the precautions taken in such environments where the danger of sexual exploitation is high, it is frequently seen that the sexual impulse inevitably overcomes whatever obstacles are set up to combat it. Can we think of a single religious community in which such exploitation has *not* occurred? Even the most reputable, the most holy, spiritual representatives have fallen victim to sexual temptation in the close environment of a spiritual community, and most especially within the teacher/student relationship. Exploitation is inexcusable, but if the right conditions prevail, the occurrence of exploitation is almost inevitable. Whether man or woman, we are all susceptible to temptation; and yet, we are rightly appalled whenever and wherever such sexual exploitation occurs.

My own teacher, Swami Muktananda, who seemed above such temptation, lived constantly surrounded by adoring young women, and eventually fell victim to biology's dictates. His sexual exploitation of some of his young female disciples brought about his own downfall and brought great disappointment to his many followers. I was one of those who, having discovered this aspect of his path, renounced it, and refused to follow him down this road. Despite my warnings, however, some others of his disciples, mistaking loyalty to the guru for loyalty to the Self, defended his actions, and accepted his unholy conduct as a guide to their own actions. One of these, a fellow Swami and disciple of Muktananda, known as Swami Shankarananda, established and ran an ashram in Australia under the name of 'Shiva Yoga', and over the years allegedly took sexual advantage of over forty young women. His crimes were recently exposed, and he was forced to resign his position in disgrace.¹ This is karma. This is justice.

Will we never learn? This desire to be the guru, the director, to have unlimited power and magnificence, seems to be the driving force that overwhelms one's rational caution and spiritual conscience, and leads a man to utter ruin. *This is a cautionary tale for all spiritual teachers:* When, in the course of your teaching career, you come to recognize the dangers inherent in your environment, when you see the moral quagmire in the road ahead, refuse to continue down that path. It is better to live a saintly life isolated and in the poorest of conditions than to delight yourself in tawdry pleasures while destroying your own soul. God's justice is no joke. Believe in it. He is the angel of goodness, but He is also the arbiter of justice. He provides the heaven of peace; and He also provides the agony of the abyss.

NOTES:

1. For more information concerning the downfall of this swami, see www.leavingshivayoga.guru.

* * *

12. Seek Enlightenment (10-15-2017)

Sex is very pleasant, it's true;
 But if you had the choice, wouldn't you prefer enlightenment?
 You *do* have the choice, but what do you choose?
 The electrical discharge that occurs with an orgasm?
 Or the redirection of that lively energy to focus on the Self?

The mind, following the sexual lure, becomes fixed on its objective,
 And, as every dog knows, one thing leads to another.
 But the satisfaction, so brief, is far too soon gone,
 And quickly the urge once again makes itself known.
 It's an addiction with diminishing returns, my friend;
 Yet it brutally enslaves you all your life long
 Till your body is shriveled and your mind becomes weak.

Before this enslavement establishes its hold,
 Set your sights on a loftier and worthier goal:
 Seek enlightenment, seek union, realization of the Truth.
 In either direction, the pathway is clear;
 So, make a choice that won't ultimately reward you with regret.
 Seek God: His Grace will inspire you; His strength will uphold you,
 And His Light will increase in you as wisdom and joy.

* * *

13. The Conflict Between Nature And Grace: A Study of The Theology of Thomas á Kempis (7-8-2015)

One of the most beloved Christian texts outside of the Holy Bible is the Imitation of Christ by Thomas á Kempis. It is this book that held the primary place in my early years of devotion and holds a central place in my heart to this day. I even published a condensed version of that book which I entitled Thomas á Kempis: On The Love of God.¹ In a few chapters of the Third Book of my edition of this classic devotional text, Thomas describes the differences between Nature and Grace. This analysis plays a great part in Thomas' theology, and it had a great effect on me in those early years in my Santa Cruz cabin, and has continued to hold great significance for me up to the current time.

When I think about this conflict between Nature and Grace, many questions come up in my mind. And, so, I would like to focus on this theology of Thomas' for a time to see if I can resolve some of those questions: First, it is necessary to acknowledge that Nature is God's creation, and so, if His Grace is contrary to our Nature, then, it is contrary to what He Himself has produced. Has He not, through the process of biological evolution, instilled in us the procreative urge, the instinct for self-preservation, the love of life? And while most people would object that the following of these instincts and urges is only 'natural', it is these very natural instincts and urges that, while they are conducive to a 'natural' life, are, in Thomas' theology, in conflict with Grace.

So, is this notion of a conflict between Nature and Grace, then, simply a carryover from an anachronistic medieval Christian ascetic ideal? No. It seems that it is a universally valid observation. In the Vedanta tradition, Nature and Grace are represented as Maya and Brahman, or Prakrti and Purusha; in Sufi theology, they are Khalq and Haqq; in Buddhism, they are samsara and nirvana, or Tathata. And, though the notion that these two are opposed cannot be understood or accepted by everyone, it is a timeless spiritual truth that in order to fully love God, one must renounce the love of the world; to ascend to the Creator, one must transcend the Creation. Only those who aspire to God and are familiar with the interior operation of God's Grace will understand what Thomas intends to communicate regarding the opposition of Nature and Grace. Here, let him explain it himself in the following passage:

Chapter II.
That Grace Will Not Be Mixed
With Love Of Worldly Things

“My son, Grace is a precious thing and will not be mixed with any private love nor with worldly comforts. It behooves you to cast away all hindrances of Grace if you will have the gracious gift thereof. Choose therefore a secret place and love to be alone and keep yourself from hearing of vain tales and fables. Offer to God devout prayers and ask earnestly that you may have a contrite heart and a pure conscience. Think all the world is nothing and prefer My service before all other things; for you may not have your mind on Me and therewithal delight in transitory pleasures. It behooves you, therefore, to withdraw yourself from your dearest friends, and from all your acquaintances, and to sequester your mind wholly from the inordinate desire of worldly comfort as much as you may.

“O how sure a trust shall it be to a man at his departing out of this world, to feel inwardly in his soul that no earthly love nor yet the affection of any passing or transitory thing has any rule in him! But a weak person, newly turned to God, may not so easily have his heart severed from earthly desires, and the worldly-living man knows not the freedom of a man who is inwardly turned to God. And, therefore, if a man will perfectly be spiritual and holy, he must as well renounce strangers as kinsfolk; and especially before all others he must be most wary of himself, for if he overcomes himself perfectly he shall the sooner overcome all other enemies. The most noble and most perfect victory is for a man to have the victory over himself. He, therefore, who holds himself so much subject that sensuality obeys to reason, and reason in all things is obedient to Me, is the true overcomer of himself and the lord of the world.

“But if you covet to come to that point, you must begin manfully, and set your axe to the root of the tree and fully cut away and destroy in yourself all the inordinate inclination that you have to yourself or to any private or material things. For of that vice, that a man loves himself inordinately, depends nearly all that ought summarily to be destroyed in man. And if that is truly overcome, immediately shall follow great tranquility and peace of conscience. But inasmuch as there are but few who labor to die to themselves, or to overcome themselves perfectly, therefore many lie still in their fleshly feelings and worldly comforts, and may in no way rise up in spirit above themselves; for it behooves him who will be free in heart and have contemplation of Me, to mortify all evil inclinations that he has to himself and to the world, and not to be bound to any creature by an inordinate or private love.”

The above passage should give the reader a sense of the great difficulty and hardship undertaken by a soul in pursuit of the intimate contemplation of God. Indeed, it could not be done at all were it not for God's Grace that buoys and uplifts the devout soul, preventing it from reverting to its inherent Nature. Nonetheless, just as, from the perspective of Vedanta, Maya claims many victims, it is not surprising that, in the Christian context, many spiritual aspirants occasionally succumb to Nature—since Maya and Nature are one and the same. Here, in the following passage, Thomas goes on to explain more fully the need to renounce the things of Nature in order to embrace more fully the things of God:

***Chapter III.
How We Should Forget All Created Things
In Order That We Might Find Our Creator***

Lord, I have great need of Thy grace, and of Thy great singular grace, before I may come thither where no creature shall hinder me from the perfect beholding of Thee; for as long as any transitory thing holds me or has rule in me, I may not fly freely to Thee. He coveted to fly without hindrance who said: 'Who shall give me wings like a dove that I may fly into the bosom of my Lord!'

I see well that no man is more restful in this world than is that man who always has his mind and his whole intent upward to God, and nothing desires of the world. It behooves him therefore who would perfectly forsake himself and behold Thee, to rise above all creatures, and himself also, and through excess of mind to see and behold that Thou, maker of all things, hast nothing among all creatures like Thyself. Unless a man is clearly delivered from the love of all creatures, he may not fully tend to his creator, and that is the greatest cause why there are so few contemplatives; that is to say, because there are so few who will sequester themselves willingly from the love of created things.

For contemplation great grace is required, for it lifts up the soul and ravishes it up in Spirit above itself. And unless a man is lifted up in Spirit above himself and is clearly delivered in his love from all creatures and is perfectly and fully united to God, whatsoever he knows or whatsoever he has, either in virtue or learning, is worth but little before God. Therefore, he shall have but little virtue and long shall he lie still in earthly pleasures, who accounts anything great or worthy to be praised but God alone; for all other things besides God are nothing and are to be accounted as nothing. There is great difference between the wisdom of a devout man, enlightened by grace, and the learning of a subtle and studious scholar; and

that learning is much more noble and much more worthy that comes by the influence and gracious gift of God than that which is gotten by the labor and study of man.

Many desire to have the gift of contemplation, but they will not use such things as are required for contemplation. And one great hindrance of contemplation is that we stand so long in outward signs and in material things and take no heed of the perfect mortifying of our body to the spirit. I know not how it is, nor with what spirit we are led, nor what we pretend, we who are called spiritual persons, that we take greater labor and study for transitory things than we do to know the inward state of our own soul.

But alas for sorrow, as soon as we have made a little recollection to God, we run forth to outward things and do not search our own conscience with due examination, as we should, nor heed where our affection rests, nor sorrow that our deeds are so evil and so unclean as they are. In ancient times, the people corrupted themselves with fleshly uncleanness, and therefore followed the great flood; and truly, when our inward affection is corrupted, our deeds following thereon are also corrupted, for of a clean heart springs the fruit of a good life.

It is oftentimes asked what deeds such a man has done, but of what zeal or with what intent he did them is little regarded. Whether a man is rich, strong, fair, able, a good writer, a good singer, or a good laborer, is often inquired; but how poor he is in spirit, how patient and meek, how devout, and how inwardly turned to God, is little regarded. Nature beholds the outward deed, but grace turns her to the inward intent of the deed. The first is often deceived, but the second puts her trust wholly in God and is not deceived.

And here, in this beautiful chapter, Thomas sets down the foundation for his theology as he explains more intricately how Nature and Grace differ from and oppose one another:

Chapter IV. Of The Differences Between Nature And Grace

“My son, take good heed of the motions of Nature and Grace for they are very subtle and much contrary, the one to the other, and hardly may they be known asunder, unless it is by a spiritual man who is inwardly illumined in his soul through grace. Every man desires some goodness and pretends somewhat of

goodness in all his words and deeds, and therefore under pretense of goodness many are deceived.

“Nature is wily and full of deceit and draws many to her whom she oftentimes snares and deceives; and ever she beholds her own wealth as the goal of her work. But Grace walks simply without deceit, she declines from all evil, she pretends no guile, but all things she does purely for God, in whom finally she rests.

“Nature will not gladly die, nor gladly be oppressed or overcome; neither will she be gladly under another nor be kept in subjection. But Grace studies how she may be mortified to the world, and to the flesh; she resists sensuality, she seeks to be subject, she desires to be overcome, she will not use her own liberty. She loves to be held under holy discipline and covets not to have lordship over any one creature but to live and to stand always under the fear of God, and for His love is always ready to bow herself meekly under every creature.

“Nature labors for her own profit and advantage, and much beholds what winning comes to her by others. Grace beholds not what is profitable to herself, but what is profitable to many. Nature gladly receives honor and reverence, but Grace refers all honor and reverence to God. Nature dreads reprovings and despisings; but Grace joys, for the name of God, to suffer them both and takes them, when they come, as special gifts of God. Nature loves idleness and bodily rest; but Grace cannot be idle without doing some good deed, and therefore she seeks gladly some profitable labors.

“Nature desires fair and curious things. But Grace delights in meek and simple things; she despises not hard things, nor refuses to be clad in poor clothing and simple garments. Nature gladly beholds things temporal, she joys at worldly winnings, is heavy for worldly losses, and is quickly moved by a sharp word. But Grace beholds things everlasting. She trusts not in things temporal, and is not troubled with the loss of them, nor grieved by an angry word; for she has laid her treasure in God and in spiritual things, which may not perish. Nature is covetous and more gladly takes than gives; she loves much to have property and private things. But Grace is piteous and liberal to the poor, she flees singular profit, she is content with little and judges it more blessed to give than to take.

“Nature inclines to the love of creatures, to the love of the flesh, to vanities and runnings-about, and to see new things in the world. But Grace draws a man to the love of God and to the love of virtues; she renounces all created things, she flees the world, she hates desires of the flesh, she restrains liberty and wandering-about, and avoids as much as she may to be seen among gatherings of people. Nature

gladly has some outward solace wherein she may delight in her outward senses. but Grace seeks only to be comforted in God and to delight her in His goodness above all things.

“Nature does all things for her own winning and singular profit; she may do nothing free, but hopes always to have the same back again, or more, or applause, or favor of the people; and covets much that her deeds and works be greatly pondered and praised. But Grace seeks no temporal thing, and no other reward for her hire but only God. She will have no more of temporal goods than shall be needful for the getting of the goods everlasting, and cares not for the vain praise of the world.

“Nature joys greatly in many friends and kinsfolk, and glories much in a noble place of birth and in her noble blood and kindred; she joys with mighty men, she flatters rich men, and is merry with those who she thinks similar to her in nobleness of the world. But Grace makes a man to love his enemies, she has no pride in worldly friends; she regards not the nobleness of kin, nor the house of her father, unless the more virtue is there. She favors more the poor than the rich, she has more compassion for an innocent than for a mighty man; she joys ever in truth and not in falsehood, and always comforts good men more and more to profit and grow in virtue and goodness, and to seek daily more high gifts of Grace, that they may through good virtuous works be made into the sons of God.

“Nature immediately complains for the wanting of a very little thing that she would have or for a little worldly sorrow. But Grace bears gladly all neediness and wantings of the world. Nature inclines all things to herself and to her own profit as much as she may; she argues for herself and strives and fights for herself. But Grace renders all things to God, of whom all things flow and spring originally; she ascribes no goodness to herself and presumes not of herself; she strives not and prefers not her own opinion before other men’s, but in every sentence, she submits her meekly to the eternal wisdom and judgment of God.

“Nature covets to know and to hear new secret things. She will that her works be showed outwardly and will have experience of many things in the world by her outward senses; she desires also to be known and to do great things in the world, whereof applause and praising may follow. But Grace cares not for any new things nor for any curious things, whatsoever they may be; for she knows well that all such things come of vanity, and that no new things may long endure upon earth.

She teaches to restrain the outward senses and to avoid all vain pleasure and outward show, and meekly keeps secret things that in the world would be greatly

marveled at and praised. And, in everything and in every science, she seeks some spiritual profit to herself, and praise and honor to almighty God. She will not that her good deeds nor her inward devotion be outwardly known, but most desires that our Lord be blessed in all His works, who gives all things freely of His great and excellent love.

“This Grace is a light from heaven and a spiritual gift of God. It is the proper mark and token of elect people and a guarantee of the everlasting life. It lifts a man from love of earthly things to the love of heavenly things and makes a carnal man to be a man of God. And the more that nature is oppressed and overcome, the more Grace is given, and the soul through new gracious visitations is daily shaped anew and formed more and more to the image of God.

Thomas continues in this vein, reiterating the great value of God’s Grace in bringing the soul to a transcendence of its own Nature, so that it may become the true servant of God and know its identity in Him:

Chapter V. Of The Corruption Of Nature And Of The Worthiness Of Grace

O Lord God, who hast made me to Thine image and likeness, grant me this Grace that Thou hast shown to be so great and so necessary to the health of my soul, that I may overcome this wretched Nature which draws me always to sin and to the losing of my own soul. I feel in my flesh the law of sin fighting strongly against the law of my spirit, which leads me as a slave to obey my sensuality in many things; nor may I resist the passions thereof unless Thy grace doth assist me.

I have therefore great need of Thy grace, and a great abundance of it, if I shall overcome this wretched nature which always from my youth has been ready and prone to sin. In my inward self, that is, in the reason of my soul, I delight myself in Thy laws and in Thy teachings, knowing that they are good, righteous and holy; and that all sin is evil, and to be fled and avoided. Yet in my outward self, that is to say, in my fleshly feeling, I serve the law of sin when I obey my sensuality rather than my reason. And of this it follows also that I will good, but I may not for weakness perform it without Thy Grace. And sometimes I intend to do many good deeds but, because the Grace that should help me is lacking, I go backward and fail in my doing. I know the way to perfection, and I see clearly how I should do; but I am so oppressed with the heavy burden of this corrupt body of sin, that I lie still

and rise not to perfection. O Lord, how necessary therefore is Thy Grace to me, to begin well, to continue well, and to end well; for without Thee I may do nothing that is good.

O heavenly Grace, without which our merits are worth nothing, and the gifts of nature to be considered nothing; and beauty, strength, wit, and eloquence may avail nothing! Come Thou, shortly, and help me! The gifts of Nature are common to good men and to bad; but Grace and Love are the gifts of elect and chosen people, whereby they are marked, and made able and worthy to reach the kingdom of God. This Grace is of such worthiness that neither the gift of prophecy, nor the working of miracles, nor the gift of wisdom and knowledge, may avail anything without it; nor yet may faith, hope, or other virtues, be acceptable to Thee without Grace and Love.

O blessed Grace, that maketh the poor in spirit to be rich in virtue and him who is rich in worldly goods to be meek and low in heart! Come and descend into my soul, and fulfill me with Thy spiritual comforts, so that I do not fail and faint for weariness and dryness!

I beseech Thee, Lord, that I may find Grace in Thy sight, for Thy Grace shall suffice to me; though I am tempted and vexed with troubles on every side, yet I shall not need to fear while Thy Grace is with me. For she is my strength, she is my comfort, my counsel and help. She is stronger than all my enemies and wiser than all the wisest of this world. She is the mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline, the light of the heart. She is the comfort of trouble, the driver-away of heaviness, the avoider of dread, the nourisher of devotion, and the bringer-in of sweet tears and devout weepings. What am I then, without grace, but a dry stock to cast away! Grant me, therefore, that Thy Grace may prevent me and follow me, and make me ever busy and diligent in good works unto my death. So may it be!

And here, in the following chapter, Thomas brings to a close his impassioned rationale, and ends with a paeon of praise for God:

Chapter VI.
That It Is Sweet And Delectable To
Serve God, And To Forsake The World

Now shall I speak yet again to Thee, my Lord, and not cease. And I shall say in the ears of my Lord: My God and King who is in heaven! O how great is the abundance of Thy sweetness which Thou hast hidden and kept for those who dread Thee! But what is it then to those who love Thee? Truly, it is the unspeakable sweetness of contemplation that Thou givest to those who love Thee. In this, Lord, Thou hast most showed the sweetness of Thy love to me, that when I was not, Thou madest me; and when I wandered far from Thee Thou broughtest me again to serve Thee, and commandest me to love Thee.

O fountain of love everlasting, what shall I say of Thee! How may I forget Thee who hast promised thus lovingly to remember me! When I was about to perish, Thou hast shown Thy mercy to me above all that I could have thought or desired, and hast sent me of Thy grace and of Thy love above my merits. But what shall I give to Thee again for all this goodness? It is not given to all men to forsake the world and to take a solitary life and only to serve Thee. And yet it is no great burden to serve Thee, whom every creature is bound to serve. It ought not therefore to seem any great thing to me to serve Thee, but rather it should seem a great wonder to me that Thou wilt receive so poor and so unworthy a creature as I am into thy service, and that Thou wilt join me to Thy well-beloved servants.

Lo, Lord, all things that I have and all that I do Thee service with is Thine. And yet Thy goodness is such that Thou rather servest me than I Thee. For behold, heaven and earth and the planets and stars, which Thou hast created to serve man are ready at thy bidding and do daily that which Thou hast commanded. And Thou hast also ordained angels to the ministry of man. But above all this, Thou hast promised to serve man Thyself and hast promised to give Thyself unto him.

What then shall I give to Thee in return for this thousand-fold goodness? Would to God that I might serve Thee all the days of my life, or at the least that I might one day be able to do Thee faithful service; for Thou art worthy all honor, service, and praising, forever. Thou art my Lord and my God, and I Thy poorest servant, most bound before all others to love and praise Thee; and I never ought to grow weary of the praising of Thee. This is what I ask and desire, that I may always laud Thee and praise Thee. Promise therefore, most merciful Lord, to supply whatsoever is lacking in me; for it is great honor to serve Thee, and for Thy love to despise all earthly things.

They shall have great Grace who freely submit themselves to Thy holy service. And they shall find also the most sweet consolation of the Spirit and shall have great freedom of spirit here who forsake all worldly business and choose a hard and strict life in this world for Thy name.

O glad and joyful service of God, by which a man is made free and holy, and blessed in the sight of God! O holy state of religion, which makes a man similar to the angels, pleasing to God, dreadful to wicked spirits, and to all faithful people very highly commendable! O service much to be embraced and always to be desired, by which the high goodness is won, and the everlasting joy and gladness is gotten without end!

* * *

NOTE:

1. My book, *Thomas á Kempis: On The Love of God*, from which these excerpts are taken, is available as a free downloadable PDF document on my website: www.themysticsvision.com.

* * *

VII. MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

Mystical experience is the culmination of all spiritual practices, including meditation. It is that interior mystical vision in which one's divinity is revealed. To know God is to know one's own eternal Self and to realize the pervasiveness of that divine Self throughout the universe.

1. Who Sees God? (Part One) *(from Reflections On The Soul, 2010)*

It is only God (the Divine Mind) who sees God—but He does so through the souls of men. One's soul is able to search within itself and ascend in consciousness all the way to God. If it were not an expression of the Divine, it could not do that. When a soul rises to the vision of God, it is no longer soul, but is merged in and made one with God, so that it is not the soul that sees, but God Himself who is seeing Himself. Looking within itself, it sees its own original Self, an infinite, eternal, and all-pervasive Self. No longer two, soul and God are one Spirit, seeing Itself. Nonetheless, the vision is retained by the soul, even after the soul is no longer united in vision with God. And so, the soul is able to speak of the experience. And the story told is identical with that of all other souls who have seen God. There have been, over the centuries, many well-known and unknown souls who have seen Him, this soul among them. And it may be useful to look to some of the best-known seers who have described this experience, in order to piece together a consolidated description of what has been seen:

From **the Upanishads** [10th to 4th century B.C.E.]:

He cannot be seen by the eye, and words cannot reveal Him. He cannot be realized by the senses, or by austerity or the performance of rituals. By the grace of wisdom and purity of mind, He can be seen in the silence of contemplation. ²

When a wise man has withdrawn his mind from all things without, and when his spirit has peacefully left all inner sensations, let him rest in peace, free from the movement of will and desire. ... For it has been said: There is something beyond our mind, which abides in silence within our mind. It is the supreme mystery beyond thought. Let one's mind and subtle spirit rest upon that and nothing else.

... When the mind is silent, beyond weakness and distraction, then it can enter into a world, which is far beyond the mind: the supreme Destination. ... Then one knows the joy of Eternity. ... Words cannot describe the joy of the soul whose impurities are washed away in the depths of contemplation, who is one with the Atman, his own Self. Only those who experience this joy know what it is. ... As water becomes one with water, fire with fire, and air with air, so the mind becomes one with the infinite Mind and thus attains Freedom. ³

When in inner union he is beyond the world of the body, then the third world, the world of the Spirit, is found, where man possesses all—for he is one with the ONE. ⁴

From **the Bhagavad Gita** [5th century B.C.E.]:

When the mind of the yogi is in peace, focused on the Self within, and beyond all restless desires, then he experiences Unity. His mind becomes still, like the flame of a lamp sheltered from the winds.

When the mind rests in the prayerful stillness of yoga, by the grace of the One, he knows the One, and attains fulfillment. Then he knows the joy of Eternity; he sees beyond the intellect and the senses. He becomes the Unmoving, the Eternal. ⁵

... In this experience of Unity, the yogi is liberated, delivered from all suffering forever. ... The yogi whose heart is still, whose passions are dissolved, and who is pure of sin, experiences this supreme bliss and knows his oneness with Brahman. ⁶

Maximus of Tyre [2nd century C.E.]:

The eye cannot see God, words cannot name Him, flesh and blood cannot touch Him, the ear cannot hear Him; but within the soul That which is most fair, most pure, most intelligible, most ethereal, most honorable, can contemplate Him because it is like Him, can hear Him because of their kinship.

... The soul holds herself erect and strong, she gazes at the pure light [of the Godhead]; she wavers not, nor turns her glance to earth, but closes her ears and directs her eyes and all other senses within. She forgets the troubles and sorrows of earth, its joys and honors, its glory and its shame; and submits to the guidance of pure reason and strong love. For reason points out the road that must be followed, and love drives the soul forward, making the rough places smooth by its charm and constancy. And as we approach heaven and leave earth behind, the goal becomes clear and luminous—that is a foretaste of God's very self. On the road we learn His nature better; but when we reach the end, we see Him. ⁷

How, we must ask, do we attain such vision? And all who have experienced that inner revelation of the Divine Self declare that they have done so only through the grace of God. One cannot therefore speak of the ‘attainment’ of that vision; it is given. It cannot be produced according to one’s own will. Those who are truthful acknowledge this and give thanks to the One who so generously blessed them; and they shower Him with a constant love, knowing that this love too is His own. Here, Plotinus acknowledges this truth.

Plotinus [3rd century C.E.]:

When there enters into it a glow from the Divine, the soul gathers strength, spreads true wings, and, however distracted by its proximate environment, speeds its buoyant way to something greater; ... its very nature bears it upwards, lifted by the Giver of that love. ... Surely, we need not wonder that It possesses the power to draw the soul to Itself, calling it back from every wandering to rest before It. From It came everything; nothing is mightier. ⁸

... In advancing stages of contemplation, rising from contemplation of Nature, to that in the soul, and thence again to that in the Divine Mind, the object contemplated becomes progressively a more and more intimate possession of the contemplating being, more and more one with them. ... In the divine Mind itself, there is complete identity of knower and known, no distinction existing between being and knowing, contemplation and its object, [but] constituting a living thing, a one Life, two inextricably one. ⁹

In this state of absorbed contemplation, there is no longer any question of holding an object in view; the vision is such that seeing and seen are one; object and act of vision have become identical. ¹⁰

... There, our Self-seeing is a communion with the Self restored to purity. No doubt we should not speak of “seeing,” but, instead of [speaking of] “seen” and “seer,” speak boldly of a simple unity. For in this seeing we neither see, nor distinguish, nor are there, two. The man is changed, no longer himself nor belonging to himself; he is merged with the Supreme, sunken into It, one with It; it is only in separation that duality exists. This is why the vision baffles telling; for how could a man bring back tidings of the Supreme as something separate from himself when he has seen It as one with himself? ¹¹

Meister Eckhart [(1260-1328 C.E.):

As the soul becomes more pure and bare and poor, and possesses less of created things, and is emptied of all things that are not God, it receives God more purely, and is more completely in Him; and it truly becomes one with God, and it looks into God and God into it, face to face as it were; two images transformed into one.¹²

...Some people think that they will see God as if He were standing there and they here. It is not so. God and I, we are one.¹³ ...I am converted into Him in such a way that He makes me one Being with Himself—not a *similar* being. By the living God, it is true that there is no distinction!¹⁴ ...The eye by which I see God is the same as the eye by which God sees me. My eye and God's eye are one and the same—one in seeing, one in knowing, and one in loving.¹⁵

The soul awakens to know itself as the Divine Mind, but the One, Its prior, is experienced only from a distance, as it were. The One is the transcendent Source of all, and beyond all predication or qualification; It is indescribable, as It is prior to all discernible qualities. The soul is keenly aware of the blissful imperturbability, unlimited power, omniscience, and eternal existence of its ultimate Source; but It is not distinctly 'seen', nor does the soul 'merge' with It. Nonetheless, the soul in union with the Divine Mind keenly recognizes that One as the beginningless Source of its own identity and of all that follows upon It—as the Sun hidden in the cover of the clouds is recognized to be the source of the omnipresent light.

That One was even before the first movement of Creation:

Rig Veda [15th century B.C.E.):

Then, neither the non-Real (*asat*) nor the Real (*sat*) existed. There was no sky then, nor the heavens beyond it. What was contained by what, and where, and who sheltered it? What unfathomed depths, what cosmic ocean, existed then?

Then, neither death nor deathlessness existed; between day and night there was as yet no distinction. That ONE (*tad ekam*), by Its own power (*svadha*) breathlessly breathed.¹⁶

Lao Tze [6th century B.C.E.):

Before heaven and earth existed, there was something unformed, silent, alone, unchanging, constant and eternal; It could be called ‘the Source of the Universe.’ I do not know Its name and simply call It “Tao.”¹⁷

Plotinus:

The All-Transcendent, utterly void of multiplicity, is Unity’s Self, independent of all else... It is the great Beginning, wholly and truly One. All life belongs to It.¹⁸ ...The One is, in truth, beyond all statement; whatever you say would limit It; the All Transcendent has no name.¹⁹ ... [It] is That which is the truly Existent. ... It is the Source from which all that appears to exist derives that appearance.²⁰

... Everywhere one and whole, It is at rest throughout. But, ... in Its very non-action It magnificently operates and in Its very self-being It produces everything by Its Power.²¹ ... This Absolute is none of the things of which It is the Source; Its nature is that nothing can be affirmed of It—not existence, not essence, not life—It transcends all these. But possess yourself of It by the very elimination of [individual] being, and you hold a marvel! Thrusting forward to This, attaining, and resting in Its content, seek to grasp It more and more, understanding It by that intuitive thrust alone, but knowing Its greatness by the beings that follow upon It and exist by Its power.²²

Here, **Meister Eckhart** distinguishes between the One and the Divine Mind, using the terms “Godhead” and “God”:

God and the Godhead are as different from each other as heaven and earth... Creatures speak of God—but why do they not mention the Godhead? Because there is only unity in the Godhead and there is nothing to talk about. God acts. The Godhead does not. ...The difference between God and the Godhead is the difference between action and non-action. ...The Godhead is poor, naked and empty as though it were not; it has not, wills not, wants not, works not, gets not. It is God who has the treasure and the bride in Him; the Godhead is as void as though it were not.²³

Eckhart’s “God” is the manifestory Power of the One, which has been referred to as *Prakrti*, *Maya*, *Nous*, *Shakti*, *Logos*, and many other names; we are calling It ‘the Divine Mind’. The Divine Mind is not a thing apart from or distinct from the One; It is the causal aspect or agency of the One. It is the ‘Creator’ aspect of

Divinity, from which Soul is radiated as an extension of Itself. It is the Divine Mind with which the soul is reunited, and by It, through It, knows the One as its eternal Self.

But how can it be that this immoveable, unchangeable, contentless One produces from Itself a Power so great containing all this universe? Is it, as the *Rig Veda* suggests, the arising of ‘Desire’ within the One that gives rise to that Power; or is it, as Plotinus suggests, a ‘Circumradiation’; or is it simply a wish to be many, instead of alone, as suggested by the author of the *Taittiriya Upanishad* or the Gnostic, Valentinus? Here is the *Rig Veda*’s theory of Desire as the originating impetus to Creation:

Rig Veda:

In the beginning, darkness lay wrapped in darkness; all was one undifferentiated (*apraketa*) sea (*salila*). Then, within that one undifferentiated Existence, [something] arose by the heat of concentrated energy (*tapas*). What arose in That in the beginning was Desire (*kama*), [which is] the primal seed of mind (*manas*)...²⁴

And here is Plotinus’ suggestion that the Creative Power of God is a spontaneous “circumradiation” of the One:

Plotinus:

Given this immobility in the Supreme, It can neither have yielded assent nor uttered decree nor stirred in any way towards the existence of a secondary. What happened, then? What are we to conceive as rising in the innards of that immobility? It must be a circumradiation—produced from the Supreme but from the Supreme unaltering—and may be compared to the brilliant light encircling the sun and ceaselessly generated from that unchanging substance. ...There [in the One] is the Unity which is the potentiality of all existence. ...The perfection entails the offspring; [for] a power so vast could not remain unfruitful.²⁵

And here is the suggestion in the *Upanishads* that the Creation was born of the desire of the One to be many:

Taittiriya Upanishad:

He [the One] desired: ‘May I be many, may I procreate. He performed *tapas* (created heat); and, having performed *tapas*, He

created all this—whatever there is. Having created all this, He entered into it. Having entered into it, He became both the manifest and the unmanifest, both the defined and the undefined, both the supported and the unsupported, both the intelligent and the non-intelligent, both the real and the unreal.²⁶

And here is a similar theory from the Gnostic, Valentinus, in the second century C.E.:

Valentinus:

The Father existed alone, unbegotten, without place, without time, without counselor, and without any conceivable qualities ..., solitary and reposing alone in Himself. But as He possessed a generative Power, it pleased Him to generate and produce the most beautiful and perfect that He had in Himself, for He did not love solitude. He was all love, but love is not love if there is no object of love. So, the Father, alone as He was, projected and generated [the world].²⁷

Each of these speculations provides a plausible scenario; but do we really think that we can determine, by any amount of speculation, just how and why the one Divine Father, the absolute Consciousness, managed to possess a creative Power by which the Spiritual and material universe is produced? Really! If, as the Gnostic, Valentinus, and others have suggested, He abandoned His Oneness and entered into all this apparent multiplicity and tumult out of a desire to escape Aloneness, to be many, it may be that He is happily enjoying being all these worlds and creatures; or it may be that, underneath it all, He is still quite aware that it's all only Himself, and still feels Alone. What do *you* think?

NOTES:

1. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247c-e; trans. by Benjamin Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, London, Oxford University Press, 1871.
2. *Mundaka* Upanishad, III.1; Mascaro, Juan, *The Upanishads*, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1965.
3. Svetasvatara Upanishad, VI.19-23.
4. *Ibid.*, II.1.
5. *Bhagavad Gita*, 6:18-21; Mascaro, Juan, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1962.
6. *Ibid.*, 6:23-27.
7. Maximus of Tyre, *Diss.*, XI.9-10
8. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 38:6:22-23; MacKenna, Stephen (trans.), *Plotinus: The Enneads*, London, Faber & Faber, 1956; p. 199.
9. *Ibid.*, 30:3:8; pp. 113-114.

10. *Ibid.*, 38:6:35; p. 204.
11. *Ibid.*, 9:6:10; p. 221.
12. Meister Eckhart, Treatise A.2, Colledge E. & McGinn, B. (trans.), Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense, Ramsey, N.J., Paulist Press, 1982; p. 222. *Ibid.*, *Sermon 6*; p. 188.
13. Meister Eckhart, Sermon 18, Blackney, Raymond B., *Meister Eckhart, A Modern Translation*, N.Y., Harper Torchbooks, 1941; p. 181.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Meister Eckhart, Sermon 23, *Ibid.*, p. 206.
16. *Rig Veda*, x.129.1
17. Lao Tze, *Tao Teh Ching*, 25.
18. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 44:5:15-16; MacKenna, Stephen (trans.), *Plotinus: The Enneads*, London, Faber & Faber, 1956; ; pp. 162-163.
19. *Ibid.*, 49:5:13; p. 162
20. *Ibid.*, 26:3:4; p. 101
21. *Ibid.*, 47:1; p. 76
22. *Ibid.*, 30:3:10; p. 116
23. Meister Eckhart, Sermon 27, Blackney, Raymond B., *Meister Eckhart, A Modern Translation*, N.Y., Harper Torchbooks, 1941; pp. 225-226.
24. *Rig Veda*, x.129.2-5
25. *Enneads*, V.1.4-8: The Three Initial Hypostases
26. Taittiriya Upanishad, II.6.1, Swami Nikhilananda, *The Principal Upanishads*, N.Y., Dover Publications, 1963, 2003; p. 269.
27. Hippolytus, *Refutatio Omnium Heresium* VI.29.5ff. Roberts, Rev. A. & Donaldson, J. (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1892; Vol. VI.

* * *

2. Who Sees God? (Part Two)

(from *Reflections On The Soul, 2010; rev. 7-8-2014*)

In many religious traditions, the One, the absolute Ground, is regarded as the masculine component, and Its Creative Power (the Divine Mind) is regarded as the feminine aspect. This genderization of God and His Power is certainly not to be taken literally, but it is merely a metaphorical device to emphasize their apparent duality within a subsuming Unity. It is a metaphor that is most evident in the Hindu and Buddhist Tantric traditions, as well as in the ancient Mesopotamian and Canaanite religious traditions; but it exists also in many other unrelated traditions, such as in the Taoist tradition, where *Tao* is the One, the Father; and *Teh*, Its feminine aspect, is Its manifestory Power:

Lao Tze:

... The Tao that can be spoken of is not the absolute Tao. That Nameless [*Tao*] is the Father of heaven and earth; That which is named [*Teh*] is the Mother of all things. ²⁸

These two are the same; they are given different names in order to distinguish between them. Together, they constitute the Supreme Mystery. ²⁹

The *Tao* is an empty cup, yet It is inexhaustible; It is the fathomless Fountainhead of all things. ³⁰ That which gave birth to the universe [*Teh*] may be regarded as the Mother of the universe. ³¹ The Womb of creation is called the Mysterious Female; it is the root of heaven and earth. ³²

The myriad objects of the world take form and rise to activity, but I have seen THAT to which they return, like the luxuriant growth of plants that return to the soil from which they spring. ³³

That ONE called *Tao* is subtle, beyond vision, yet latent in It are all forms. It is subtle, beyond vision, yet latent in It are all objects. It is dark and obscure, yet latent in It is the creative Power of life [*Teh*]. ³⁴

From the ancient days till now Its manifestation has never ceased; it is because of this [*Teh*] that we perceive the Father of all. It is the manifestation of forms that reveals to us the Father [*Tao*]. ³⁵ The *Tao* is never the doer, yet through It everything is done. ³⁶ The *Tao* fathers,

and the *Teh* brings everything forth as the world of form, time, and space.³⁷

The later Taoist sage, **Chuang Tze** [3rd century B.C.E.], explains these two: The One and Its manifestory Power, in a straightforward manner, without the symbolism of gender:

In the beginning, even nothing did not exist. There was only the Tao. Then something unnamed which did not yet have form came into existence from the *Tao*. This is *Teh*, from which all the world came into being. ...It is in this way that *Teh* created all forms.³⁸

The *Tao* is the source of the activity of universal manifestation, but It is not this activity. It is the Author of causes and effects, but It is not the causes and effects. It is the Author of universal manifestation and dissolution, but It is not the manifestation or dissolution. Everything proceeds from It and is governed by It; It is in all things, but is not identical with things, for It is neither divided nor limited.³⁹

Tao is invisible, hard to hold, and difficult to describe. However, I will outline It for you: The visible world is born of the Invisible; the world of forms is born of the Formless. The creative Power [*Teh*] is born from *Tao*, and all life forms are born of this creative Power, whereby all creation evolves into various forms.

...Life springs into existence without a visible source and is reabsorbed into that Infinite. The world exists in and on the infinite Void; how it comes into being, is sustained and once again is dissolved, cannot be seen. It is fathomless, like the Sea. Wondrously, the cycle of world-manifestation begins again after every completion. The *Tao* sustains all creation, but It is never exhausted. ... That which gives life to all creation, yet which is, Itself, never drawn upon—that is the *Tao*.⁴⁰

And here is how **Plotinus** describes the Eternal and Its Power:

Time was not yet; ... it lay ... merged in the eternally Existent and motionless with It. But an active principle there ... stirred from its rest; ... for the One contained an unquiet faculty, ... and it could not bear to retain within itself all the dense fullness of its possession. [Like] a seed at rest, the nature-principle within, unfolding outwards, makes its way towards what appears a multiple life. It was Unity self-

contained, but now, in going forth from Itself, It fritters Its unity away; It advances to a lesser greatness.⁴¹

Philo Judaeus (1st century C.E.) refers to these two as ‘God’ and His ‘Logos’:

God is high above place and time ... He is contained by nothing, but He transcends all. *But though transcending what He has made, nonetheless, He filled the universe with Himself.* [My italics]⁴² The supremely generic is God, the next is the Logos of God;⁴³ ... That which comes after God, even if it were the most venerable of all other things, holds second place, and was called feminine in contrast to the Creator of the universe, who is masculine.⁴⁴

Here is another surprisingly perceptive treatment of the One and Its Creative Power represented as masculine and feminine, by the 1st century Gnostic, **Simon Magus**, who refers to the One as “the Divine Mind”, and Its Energy-producing Power as ‘the Thought’:

There are two aspects of the One. The first of these is the Higher, the Divine Mind of the universe, which governs all things, and is masculine. The other is the lower, the Thought (*epinoia*) which produces all things, and is feminine. As a pair united, they comprise all that exists. The Divine Mind is the Father who sustains all things and nourishes all that begins and ends. He is the One who eternally stands, without beginning or end. He exists entirely alone; for, while the Thought arising from Unity, and coming forth from the Divine Mind, creates [the appearance of] duality, the Father remains a Unity. The Thought is in Himself, and so He is alone. Made manifest to Himself from Himself, He appears to be two. He becomes “Father” by virtue of being called so by His own Thought.

Since He, Himself, brought forward Himself, by means of Himself, manifesting to Himself His own Thought, it is not correct to attribute creation to the Thought alone. For She (the Thought) conceals the Father within Herself; the Divine Mind and the Thought are intertwined. Thus, though [they appear] to be a pair, one opposite the other, the Divine Mind is in no way different from the Thought, inasmuch as they are one.

Though there appears to be a Higher, the Mind, and a lower, the Thought, truly, It is a Unity, just as what is manifested from these two [the world] is a unity, while appearing to be a duality. The Divine

Mind and the Thought are discernible, one from the other, but they are one, though they appear to be two. [Thus,] ... there is one Divine Reality, [conceptually] divided as Higher and lower; generating Itself, nourishing Itself, seeking Itself, finding Itself, being mother of Itself, father of Itself, sister of Itself, spouse of Itself, daughter of Itself, son of Itself. It is both Mother and Father, a Unity, being the Root of the entire circle of existence.⁴⁵

The Divine Mind possesses Its own light of Consciousness which we name 'Soul'; but Soul, being invisible Spirit, requires a substantial and relatively stable world of forms to inhabit; and so, the Divine Mind periodically sends forth a burst of Energy that transforms into the Matter of which the physical universe is constituted. He sends forth this Energy in cycles, first projecting His Light Energy, which transforms into the universe of matter in its four dimensions; and then, at the end of a cycle, withdrawing that universe of matter, time and space. To us, perceiving this drama from the temporal side, these cycles appear to last for billions and billions of years; but for the soul united in consciousness with the Eternal, the Divine Mind, they are seen to last but the space of a breath.

The Divine Consciousness, or Soul, both contains and inhabits this material universe formed by the Divinely-manifested Energy, becoming its indwelling evolutionary force, its living vitality, and its conscious Intelligence. By inhabiting or permeating the distinctly manifested forms, Soul becomes associated with those individually distinct forms, and thus takes on the individual characteristics of each one; It appears as separate and multiple souls, while yet retaining its inseparability and singularity. Soul, by virtue of its inhabiting of body, takes on an individuality, thus becoming distinct souls; and yet, because it is identical with the Divine Mind, it retains its Divine unity as Soul, being in essence the Divine Mind.

Philo Judaeus:

That aspect of Him which transcends His powers cannot be conceived of at all in terms of place, but only as pure Being; but that power of His by which He made and ordered all things [the Logos] ... pervades the whole and passes through all the parts of the universe.⁴⁶

Heraclitus (5th century B.C.E.):

Of all the wise philosophers whose discourses I have heard, I have not found any who have realized the one Intelligence, which is distinct from all things⁴⁷ and yet pervades all things.⁴⁸ That Intelligence is One; to know It is to know the Purpose, which guides all things and is

in all things.⁴⁹ Nature has no inherent power of intelligence; Intelligence is the Divine.⁵⁰ Without It [the one Intelligence], the fairest universe is but a randomly scattered dust-heap.⁵¹

Plotinus:

There is one identical Soul, every separate manifestation being that Soul complete. The differentiated souls issue from the Unity and strike out here and there, but they are united at the Source much as light is a divided thing on earth, shining in this house and that, and yet remains one. One Soul [is] the source of all souls; It is at once divided and undivided.⁵²

... Diversity within the ONE depends not upon spatial separation, but sheerly upon differentiation; all Being, despite this plurality, is a Unity still.⁵³... The souls are apart without partition; they are no more hedged off by boundaries than are the multiple items of knowledge in one mind. The one Soul so exists as to include all souls.⁵⁴

Soul, permeating and inhabiting the universe of Matter, lends its Intelligence and Vitality to the material forms, thus bringing life and an evolutionary force to the material universe. As Heraclitus rightly states, the universe of Matter, without the Intelligence of Soul, would be nothing but 'a randomly scattered dust-heap'.

As for the material universe, which dwells within, and is permeated by, the *anima mundi*, or world soul, we have shown that it is the product of a periodic burst of (electromagnetic) Energy cast forth by the Divine Mind. This light-energy has the ability to transmute into material forms (wave-particles), which in turn aggregate into the larger forms that make up the universe.⁵⁵ Plotinus, of course, knew nothing of this, and so he could never grasp the nature of Matter.

Plotinus was also tripped up in his attempt to understand the nature of Matter by his Platonist concepts. He could only conceive of the world of things as eternal Idea-forms, and so he had to regard Matter as an eternal existent; and yet, in other instances, he saw the material universe as the very outer limits of the radiance of the Divine Mind, where, extending beyond Soul, it fades into utter darkness. Plotinus often equated this darkness, this extremity of the reach of the Divine, with the world of Matter. Brilliant and insightful as he was, he simply did not have all the facts, and so could not piece together all the elements of manifest existence into a comprehensive and consistent whole.

The eighth century Indian Nondualist philosopher, Shankara, declared that the appearance of the universe is an illusion, a product of Maya, the creative power of

Brahman. And, as contemporary science has shown, the universe does indeed consist of (a Divinely produced) Energy that transforms into material particles; but these material particles are really nothing more than submicroscopic electromagnetic impulses, mere ‘points of Energy’, interacting in such a way that the appearance of substance is produced—forming, in other words, an illusory world.

How do these “points” of Energy, these wave-particles that began as “photons”, manage to produce the illusion of form and substance? In their original abundance, they collide, transforming into particles such as electrons, and quarks—which combine to form protons and neutrons, which combine to form atoms; and the atoms combine to form molecules, which combine in vast numbers to form perceptible gases, liquids, and solids in a variety of sizes and configurations. And yet the atoms of which these perceivable solids consist are mostly empty space in their interior. In fact, all of what we call *Matter* is 99.999999999999 percent empty space; the other infinitesimal part seems to be nothing more than energy wavelets and intangible forces. Subatomic wave-particles consist of intangible electrically-charged impulses held in proximate “orbits” about one another by invisible forces, so as to form the appearance of much grander substantial entities. And these appearances are multiplied in infinite profusion and variety as if by some magician’s hand, to appear before our eyes as a multitudinous world of objects. And so, this material world, this phenomenal reality of ours, is a marvelous magic show of truly immense proportions!

Soul is Spirit, and the Divine Energy that becomes Matter is also Spirit; they are both from the Divine Mind, but the two are distinctly different: Soul is noumenon, and Matter/Energy is phenomenon. Obviously, they require distinctly different means of production. Soul, possessing Intelligence, is inherently Divine, emanating from and partaking of the Divine Intelligence. It is an extension or radiance of the Divine Itself. Whereas Matter, woven of Light Energy, had to have been produced deliberately as an illusion-producing force expressly to produce the appearance of form and substance—it is, as Shankara tells us, *Maya*, or illusion.

Intelligence, or Soul, is a direct extension of the Divine, an emanate of conscious Intelligence identical with its source; and the Energy constituting Matter is of an entirely different kind, transient and lifeless, lacking Intelligence, whose only function is to house the Soul or Spirit. We call this universe-manifesting Energy ‘electromagnetic radiation’ but it may just as rightly be regarded as ‘the power of *Maya*’.

Shankara (8th century C.E.):

Maya, ...also called the Undifferentiated, is the power (*shakti*) of the Lord. She is without beginning, ...being the Cause of all. One who has a clear intelligence infers Her existence from the effects She produces. It is She who brings forth this entire universe. Maya is neither real nor unreal, nor both together; She is neither identical with Brahman nor different from Him, nor both; She is neither differentiated nor undifferentiated, nor both. She is most wonderful and cannot be described in words.⁵⁶ ...Everything, from the intellect down to the gross physical body, is the effect of Maya. Understand that all these and Maya itself are not the [absolute] Self, and are therefore unreal, like a mirage in the desert.⁵⁷

Clearly, the Divine Energy-producing Power, also referred to as *Prakriti*, *Maya*, *Logos*, etc., must be differentiated from the Soul-emanation that is essentially identical with the Consciousness of the Divine Mind (*Purusha*). Soul, being identical with the Divine, is eternal; the world-appearance, produced by an eternal Energy, is temporal, and transient, and therefore, by Shankara's definition, 'unreal'. It is produced by the Divine Mind periodically, in a cyclic manner, similar to the production of a recurrent respiration. This has been repeatedly 'seen', experienced, in the unitive vision, and described by numerous seers. Here is how this cyclic "creation" and "destruction" is described by some others who have seen it:

Svetasvatara Upanishad (4th to 1st century B.C.E.):

He [the Lord] spreads his net [of appearance] and then withdraws it again into His *Prakriti* [His creative Power].⁵⁸

And here, from the ***Maitri Upanishad*** (5th century B.C.E.):

The supreme Spirit is immeasurable, inapprehensible, beyond conception, never-born, beyond reasoning, beyond thought. He is vaster than the infinity of space. At the end of the worlds, all things sleep; and He alone is awake in eternity. Then from his infinite space new worlds arise and awake, a universe which is a vastness of thought. In the consciousness of Brahman, the universe exists, and into Him it returns.⁵⁹

In the 5th century B.C.E., the author of the ***Bhagavad Gita*** has Krishna explaining to Arjuna the process of manifestation-dissolution in the following passages:

They who know that the vast ‘day’ of Brahma (the personified Creative Power), ever lasts a thousand ages; and that his ‘night’ lasts also a thousand ages—they know in truth day and night.

When that day comes, all the visible creation arises from the Eternal; and all creation disappears into the Eternal when the night of darkness comes. Thus, the infinity of beings which live again and again all powerlessly disappear when the night of darkness comes; and they all return again at the rising of the day. But beyond this creation, visible and invisible, there is a higher, Eternal; and when all things pass away, this remains for ever and ever. ⁶⁰

Krishna, who is identified with *Purusha*, the Eternal, continues, referring to His Creative Power by the Sankhya term, *Prakrti*:

At the end of the night of time all things return to my [creative Power, called] *Prakrti*; and when the new day of time begins, I bring them into light. Thus, through my *Prakrti* I bring forth all creation, and these worlds revolve in the revolutions of time. But I am not bound by this vast work of creation. I exist alone, watching the drama of this play. I watch and in its work of creation *Prakrti* brings forth all that moves and moves not: and thus, the worlds go on revolving. ⁶¹

What do the mystics of other traditions have to say? **Lao Tze**, of the Taoist tradition of China, who lived in the 6th century B.C.E., also spoke of the universal creation/dissolution cycle:

The myriad objects of the world take form and rise to activity, but I have seen THAT to which they return, like the luxuriant growth of plants that return to the soil from which they spring. ⁶²

And **Chuang Tze**, who lived in the 3rd century B.C.E., wrote:

The visible world is born of the Invisible; the world of forms is born of the Formless. The Creative Energy [*Teh*] is born from the Eternal [*Tao*], and all life forms are born of this Creative Energy; thus, all creation evolves into various forms.

...Life springs into existence without a visible source and is reabsorbed into that Infinite. The world exists in and on the infinite Void; how it comes into being, is sustained and once again is dissolved, cannot be seen. It is fathomless, like the sea. Wondrously, the cycle of world-manifestation begins again after every completion.

The Eternal [*Tao*] sustains all creation, but It is never exhausted. ...
That which gives life to all creation, yet which is, Itself, never drawn
upon— that is the Eternal [*Tao*]. ⁶³

Heraclitus adds his voice to the consensus:

What is within us remains the same eternally; It is the same in life and
death, waking and sleeping, youth and old age; for, It has become this
world, and the world must return to It. ⁶⁴ This ordered universe
...always was, is, and shall be, [like] an ever-living Flame that is first
kindled and then quenched in turn. ⁶⁵

(This last, by the way, led unilluminated commentators to say that Heraclitus
believed the universe was made of fire.)

By all accounts, the creative expansion and “eternal return” of the universe to a
state of potentiality in the Divine Mind was also recognized by Pythagoras (570-
490 B.C.E.), Empedocles (495-435 B.C.E.), and the early Stoics, and was an
established major tenet of Stoic metaphysics by the time of Plotinus. Yet both
Plato and Plotinus assumed that the material universe was eternal and unchanging.
Plotinus emphatically stated this opinion in his *Enneads*. How could he have
begun to imagine the countless wonders that would eventually be discovered in the
heavens with the aid of the telescope, including the revelation that the universe is
expanding, and that it had its beginning around fourteen billion years ago? No
doubt, we in this current time are also woefully deficient in both spiritual and
material knowledge, the future addition of which will one day more perfectly
complete our understanding of ourselves, our world, and our place in it.

* * *

NOTES:

28.Lao Tze, *Tao Teh Ching*, 1

29.*Ibid.*, 1

30.*Ibid.*, 4

31.*Ibid.*, 52

32.*Ibid.*, 6

33.*Ibid.*, 16

34.*Ibid.*, 21

35.*Ibid.*, 21

36.*Ibid.*, 37

37.*Ibid.*, 51

38. *Chuang Tze*, Ch. 12
39. *Ibid.*, Ch. 8
40. *Chuang Tze*, 22
41. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 45:3:11; *Op.cit.*, p. 106
42. Philo, *De posteritate Caini*, 14-16; Winston, David (trans.), *Philo Of Alexandria—The Contemplative Life, Giants, And Selections*, Ramsey, N.J., Paulist Press, 1981.
43. Philo, *Legum Allegoriorum*, 2:86; *Ibid.*, p. 93
44. Philo, *De uga et inventione*, 50-52, *Ibid.*, p. 93
45. Simon Magus, *Apophasis Megale* (“The Great Exposition”), quoted by Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutatio Omnium Heresium*, VI.8; adapted from Roberts, Rev. A. & Donaldson, J. (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1892; Vol. VI, pp. 208-210.
46. Philo, *De confusione linguarum*, 136-137; Winston, 1981; p. 90.
47. Heraclitus, based on Freeman, K., *Ancilla To The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1983; pp. 24-34. Fragment nbr. 108.
48. *Ibid.*, 113
49. *Ibid.*, 41
50. *Ibid.*, 78
51. *Ibid.*, 124
52. *Enneads*, 27:4:2-5; *Ibid.*, p. 118.
53. *Enneads*, 22:6:4; *Ibid.*, p. 184.
54. *Enneads*, 22:6:4; *Ibid.*, p. 184.
55. For details regarding the transformation of electromagnetic radiation into material particles, in this book, see the chapter on “Body”.
56. Shankara, *Vivekachudamani*; Prabhavananda, Swami (trans.), *The Crest-Jewel Of Discrimination*, Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1947; p. 59.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 62
58. Svetasvatara Upanishad, V.3.
59. Maitri Upanishad, 6.17.
60. *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapters VIII.17-20.
61. *Ibid.*, Chapter IX, 7-10.
62. Lao Tze, *Tao Teh Ching*, 16.
63. *Chuang Tze*, Chapter 22.
64. Heraclitus, fragment 88; based on Freeman, K., *Ancilla To The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1983.
65. Heraclitus, fragment 30; *Ibid.*

3. Spiritual Knowledge **(*Mystical Theology*, 2012)**

Anyone who has read widely, who is familiar with the writings of men living in past centuries as well as contemporaries, knows that accurate knowledge regarding the workings of both physical and psychological nature has increased rather than declined over the centuries, and many an assumption from centuries ago is now regarded as obsolete and inapplicable to our present understanding of things. Indeed, much of what was once common opinion among philosophers and holy men of an earlier period, is now viewed as archaic.

How unfortunate, therefore, that modern intelligent men who ponder the things of the Spirit tend to place such unquestioning faith in the authoritarian utterings of those seers who lived in very ancient times, or in a permanent literary legacy containing the purported utterances of such men! In every lasting religious tradition, there is a faithful reliance on the absolute verity and trustworthiness of writings that originated in the minds of men whose experience and learning was excellent in the time that they wrote several millennia ago, but who can no longer be regarded as well-informed by our present standards.

Spiritual understanding is frequently exempted from this kind of critical thinking because, it is argued, spiritual realities, being eternal, are not affected by changing views concerning the psychological or physical world. Yet we must recognize that the written texts handed down as religious documents do contain not only the personal perspectives of their authors, but also references to events that modern empirical scrutiny shows to have been sorely misapprehended, or simply erroneously reported.

It would be appropriate therefore for sincere researchers in each of the religious traditions to carefully re-examine even their most revered ancient books, with the understanding and realization that these holy books were written in a time when the world, let alone the distant galaxies, was yet little understood, when the notions firmly held regarding creation, cosmology, human history, and the laws of nature were yet simplistic, primitive, and often false. I am not suggesting that we should throw out all that is good and true along with the bad and false in the various religious texts; I am only suggesting that we re-evaluate our spiritual teachings in a way that better satisfies our modern intellectual integrity, and better represents our present understandings. Much of our religious past is profoundly valuable; and sadly, much of it is valuable only as an historical record chronicling the many speculative and imaginative accounts left by men of past ages.

There are a number of spiritual traditions whose roots date from a distant and obscure past, and whose tenets, though absurd on their face, are well fortified by the ardor and certainty of generations of the faithful. But antiquity doesn't guarantee accuracy, and doctrines long revered are not necessarily true. In the final analysis, it is not scripture that forms the foundation of our spiritual knowledge, but the experience of our own direct inner vision. And it is upon that spiritual vision we must rely. Every one of us is capable, with the right amount of deliberate effort, study, and contemplation, of experiencing the wisdom, love, and joy of the one divine Spirit, and of knowing it as the sole foundation of our being.

Spiritual vision is not obtained by means of the physical eyes, or any of the other senses, nor through the imaginative or psychic faculty referred to as "the mind's eye"; but rather through a yet subtler faculty arising only in the higher reaches of contemplative concentration, which is usually referred to as "the spiritual eye" or "the eye of contemplation". The spiritual eye "sees", but without the physical sense of eyesight or the deliberate projection of mindsight. The individual's interior awareness is lifted beyond his/her mental field of awareness, as well as beyond the awareness of worldly perceptions, as that awareness is transformed into a timeless, spaceless awareness of identity with the limitless and eternal Consciousness from which the universe emanates. That awareness transcends, not only the senses and the imaginative faculty, but the sense of self, or egocentric identity, as well, relieving the individual of the sense of a distinct separate identity, so that his self-awareness becomes the Self-awareness of the all-inclusive One. While this experience lasts, the individual knows this eternal Consciousness as his own, since there is no separate perceiver by which to see this Consciousness as other.

It is this unitive experience that we must consider the only valid knowledge, proof and confirmation of the divine Self, God, or Spirit. No other kind of vision is appropriate to this kind of knowledge. It has long been accepted as axiomatic that reason, in the form of philosophy or metaphysics, is powerless to provide a credible knowledge or proof of the existence of God, the divine Self, since it is limited to mental conceptions only; but God has been "seen" by many in the unitive vision by the eye of Spirit.

This unitive 'vision' bears with it a unique kind of clarity, possessing an unmistakable and indelible stamp of truth that does not accompany the mere physical or psychic kinds of vision. If it fails of the established standard for "knowing", then it must itself replace that standard, for it is the very essence of knowing. However, insofar as I know, it is a knowledge that is non-transmittable, and therefore undemonstrable. It may only with difficulty be verbally described,

but that scarcely constitutes the actual ‘knowledge’ itself. It is a knowledge obtainable only via the eye of Spirit. It should be added that the unitive vision must never be regarded by its recipient as a matter of pride, for it is *not* a deed to which the individual may lay claim. Such experience is brought about entirely by the One and only in the absence of the individual ego. The individual person is not meritorious in experiencing the unitive vision, since it is only when *he* (his ego) disappears that illumination occurs. Just as a dream-character in a dream is dissolved in the waking consciousness of the dreamer, the sense of separate selfhood (ego) is likewise dissolved in the wakeful Consciousness of the One in whom that illusory ego arises. The One alone has absolute being, and alone has the power of self-revelation. It is that One who is seen, and it is that One who sees Himself in that unitive vision. Ultimately, no other may truly be said to exist but that One who exists absolutely and forever.

Many have experienced that unitive vision who never sought it. It comes, at times, when least expected, during moments of introspective reflection, or when viewing a restful scene, or while feeling especially content or joyful. If the individual so illumined is fortunate, that unitive vision will take up perhaps twenty minutes of his life. But, for the rest of his life, his mind will hover about that vision, as a moth about a flame, in search of a continual clarification of the illuminative understanding obtained in that fleeting vision. It is in this way that he revisits the unitive vision, basking in the contemplation of the One who illumined his heart.

It is there he finds the adoration, the bliss, and the sweet wisdom which that Self has revealed to him, ever living and ever new. It is not just a memory, but it is a lasting presence in his life, benefiting him every moment, and also shedding some benefit to others whom he touches with his words. That vision is a lifelong treasure, filling his mind with a never-failing fountain of love and happiness and the brightest consolations of wisdom. Though to the world he appears empty and alone, he possesses within himself the fullness of the universe, and his solitude is the blissful aloneness of the only One.

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4. Mystical Experience (3-27-2016; rev. 7-6-2017)

Nearly everyone comes to the conclusion that there is a divine Reality that is our Source and Father, the Ground of our being, an all-embracing One, Lord and Ruler over all, permeating and coordinating all. One may arrive at this conclusion through the exercise of one's logical intelligence, or one may *experience* this reality directly as a 'mystical' experience or revelation. The intellectual formulation of this knowledge through logical analysis is capable of providing a basis for a reasonable certainty of the basic premise outlined above, but the direct 'mystical' experience of the One brings a person to the conscious *awareness* of that One as the immediate reality of one's own being, one's ultimate identity.

The question that many feel it is necessary to ask is, 'How does one attain to that direct 'mystical' experience of the One?' And I have had to confess that I have no idea how to answer that question—except to say that the one thing you can be absolutely certain of is that *you* can't make it happen. Only the eternal Lord of all can make it happen. Therefore, learn to rely upon His unfailing will. If He wishes to draw you to Him, He will reveal it as a divine urge, an implacable yearning, guiding you from within your heart. So be true to your own heart, and you can't go wrong. A guru or teacher may serve as the instrument by which the knowledge of God's presence is awakened in you, but it is God Himself who kindles the flame of heavenly desire within you, and who leads you to union. We may be able to reduce all multiplicity to two: I and Thou; but only He can reduce the two to one. And so, it is not to a human teacher that you must turn, but it is to Him within yourself that you must turn.

It seems He has unique plans for each of us, and He brings each of us along the journey's path according to His own design. No one can know how or when He will lead a person to His presence. You must make your intimate acquaintance with Him entirely by your own efforts within your own consciousness. Needless to say, even your own efforts are prompted by His Grace. So, just follow His inner promptings. Know that He is aware of your desire—in fact, He has initiated it; and He will eagerly meet you in the still of your heart when the time is right. Keep your mind on Him and He will continue to be mindful of you. And, when the time comes, when He has brought you to the purity of heart that is required, then He will bring you into His pure land, and you will be filled with His presence and know unlimited Being.

This is without doubt the greatest attainment possible in this life, providing complete and unremitting inner fulfillment. To be sure, it will not bring you wealth or worldly success; in fact, it is much more likely that you will experience economic privation and social isolation. But it is the greatest attainment possible in this life, and it will fill you with gratitude and provide you with unending peace and abundant happiness.

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5. **The Mystic's Journey** **(4-7-2015; rev. 7-6-2017)**

The person who realizes God in himself, who knows that he and the Father are one, is not a 'son' of God; he is not of miraculous birth—those are simply tales for children. Still, the person who realizes God is a distinctly peculiar individual; as a child, he is not drawn to desire the accumulation of wealth or fame. He has no interest in a career in business or politics. He has, from his earliest years, a pervasive interest in broad areas of learning that more conventional people would regard as impractical—such as poetry, literature and the history of philosophical thought. Unlike his peers and other normal young people, he has an overriding interest in the writings and sayings of the philosophers and innovative thinkers of the past. To others, he seems directionless, but he is driven by an inner fire that has its own purpose and its own imperceptible objective.

By the time he reaches his late twenties, the purpose of his searching, the direction of his objective, at last becomes clear: through his learning, he discovers the teachings of the mystics of the various religious traditions, and through them becomes enamored with God. It is then that he procures solitude and begins to spend his quiet wakeful nights in prayer and in the searching of his own heart. As his longing for God grows in intensity, he prays that he may become united with Him so that he may share the truth and glory of God with all his brothers and sisters; and in that moment the Divine within him reveals Himself in a culminating burst of inner glory, allowing him to see the world through the eyes of God, and know that all is He.

For some time, he experiences incredible heights of ecstasy. Then, in the days left to him, our mystic endeavors to fulfill his commitment to share with all God's children the knowledge God has bestowed upon him, and God enables his sharing by inspiring him with His presence. This story, though rare, occurs again and again through the ages. It is the story of the mystics who've gone before and of those who are to come. This self-concealing and self-revealing of the merciful Lord is simply a regular feature of His unfolding cosmic play. He is the Giver, and He is the receiver. It is He who sees, and He who is seen. He is the sole Reality living in this universe and in the hearts of all beings.

* * *

6. Introduction To *History of Mysticism* (from *History of Mysticism*, 1987)

Mysticism is that point of view which claims as its basis an intimate knowledge of the one source and substratum of all existence, a knowledge, which is obtained through a revelatory experience during a rare moment of clarity in contemplation. Those who claim to have actually experienced this direct revelation constitute an elite tradition, which transcends the boundary lines of individual religions, cultures and languages, and which has existed, uninterrupted, since the beginning of time. It is, as Aldous Huxley points out, the “perennial philosophy” that resurfaces again and again throughout history in the teachings of the great prophets and founders of all religions.

When we study the many speculative philosophies and religious creeds which men have espoused, we must wonder at the amazing diversity of opinions expressed regarding the nature of reality; but when we examine the testimonies of the mystics of past and present, we are struck by the unanimity of agreement between them all. Their methods may vary, but their ultimate realizations are identical in content. They tell us of a supramental experience, obtained through contemplation, which directly reveals the Truth, the ultimate, the final, Truth of all existence. It is this experience, which is the hallmark of the mystic; it goes by different names, but the experience is the same for all.

By many of the Christian tradition, this experience is referred to as “the vision of God”; yet it must be stated that such a vision is not really a “vision” at all in the sense in which we use the word to mean the perception of some ‘thing’ extraneous to ourselves. Nothing at all is perceived in “the vision of God”; rather, it is a sudden expansion, or delimitation, of one’s own awareness which experiences itself as the ultimate Ground, the primal Source and Godhead of all being. In that “vision,” all existence is experienced as Identity.

We first hear of this extraordinary revelation from the authors of the Upanishads, who lived over three thousand years ago: “I have known that spirit,” said Svetasvatara, “who is infinite and in all, who is ever-one, beyond time.”¹ “He can be seen indivisible in the silence of contemplation,” said the author of the Mundaka Upanishad.² “There a man possesses everything; for he is one with the ONE.”³ About five hundred years later, another, a young prince named Siddhartha, who was to become known as the Buddha, the enlightened one, sat communing inwardly in the forest, when suddenly, as though a veil had been lifted, his mind became infinite and all-encompassing: “I have seen the Truth!” he exclaimed; “I am the Father of the world, sprung from myself!”⁴ And again, after

the passage of another five hundred years, another young man, a Jew, named Jesus, of Nazareth, sat in a solitary place among the desert cliffs of Galilee, communing inwardly, when suddenly he realized that the Father in heaven to whom he had been praying was his very own Self; that he was, himself, the sole Spirit pervading the universe; “I and the Father are one!” he declared. ⁵

Throughout history, this extraordinary experience of unity has repeatedly occurred; in India, in Rome, in Persia, in Amsterdam, in China, devout young men and women, reflecting on the truth of their own existence, experienced this amazing transcendence of the mind, and announced to everyone who would listen that they had realized the truth of man and the universe, that they had known their own Self, and known it to be the All, the Eternal. And throughout succeeding ages, these announcements were echoed by others who had experienced the same realization: “I am the Truth!” exclaimed the Muslim, al-Hallaj; “My Me is God, nor do I recognize any other Me except my God Himself,” said the Christian saint, Catherine of Genoa. And Rumi, Jnaneshvar, Milarepa, Kabir and Basho from the East, and Eckhart, Boehme and Emerson from the West, said the same.

These assertions by the great mystics of the world were not made as mere philosophical speculations; they were based on experience—an experience so convincing, so real, that all those to whom it has occurred testify unanimously that it is the unmistakable realization of the ultimate Truth of existence. In this experience, called *samadhi* by the Hindus, *nirvana* by the Buddhists, *fana* by the Muslims, and “the mystic union” by Christians, the consciousness of the individual suddenly becomes the consciousness of the entire vast universe. All previous sense of duality is swallowed up in an awareness of indivisible unity. The man who previously regarded himself as an individualized soul, encumbered with sins and inhabiting a body, now realizes that he is, truly, the one Consciousness; that it is he, himself, who is manifesting as all souls and all bodies, while yet remaining completely unaffected by the unfolding drama of the multiform universe.

Even if, before, as a soul, he sought union with his God, now, there is no longer a soul/God relationship. He, himself, he now realizes, is the one Existence in whom there is neither a soul nor a God, but only the one Self, within whom this “imaginary” relationship of soul and God manifested. For him, there is no more relationship, but only the eternal and all-inclusive I AM. Not surprisingly, this illuminating knowledge of an underlying ‘I’ that is the Soul of the entire universe has a profoundly transformative effect upon the mind of those who have experienced it. The sense of being bound and limited to an individual body and mind, set in time and rimmed by birth and death, is entirely displaced by the keenly

experienced awareness of unlimited Being; of an infinitely larger, unqualified Self beyond birth and death. It is an experience, which uniquely and utterly transforms one's sense of identity, and initiates a permanently acquired freedom from all doubt, from all fear, from all insecurity forevermore. Little wonder that all who experience such liberating knowledge wish to share it, to announce in exuberant song to everyone who will hear that, through the inner revelation of wisdom, "You shall know the truth, and the Truth will make you free!"

If we can believe these men, it is this experience of unity, which is the ultimate goal of all knowledge, of all worldly endeavor; the summit of human attainment, which all men, knowingly or unknowingly, pursue. It would seem, then, a valuable task to study and review the lives and teachings of those who have acquired this knowledge. In this book, I have sought to present just such a study and anthology; it is presented in an historical perspective in order to better view the long-enduring tradition of mystical thought, and to reveal more clearly the unity underlying the diversity of its manifold expressions. Naturally, it has not been possible to include every single instance of mystical experience, or to touch upon all the myriad extensions of mystical knowledge, but I have attempted to tell the story of the lives and teachings of those who most intelligibly represent the mystical tradition as it has manifested throughout the ages. It is a story that begins long, long ago, in a past so remote that it is but vague and faint, beyond the reach of our straining vision, obscure in the hazy mists of time.⁶

NOTES:

1. Svetasvatara Upanishad, 3
2. Mundaka Upanishad, 3:1
3. Svetasvatara Upanishad, 1
4. *Saddharma bundarika*, 15:21; Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy* (Vol. I), London, Geo. Allen & Unwin, 1962, p. 600.
5. New Testament, *Book of John*: 10:30.
6. *History of Mysticism*, from which this Introduction is excerpted, is available for download as a PDF document at my website:www.themysticsvision.com.

* * *

7. Conclusion To *History of Mysticism*¹ (from *History of Mysticism*, 1987)

It should be abundantly evident from the foregoing study that throughout the ages men and women have come face to face with God, the absolute Source and Ground of all existence; and that it is this very experience which constitutes the one common thread that binds together in unity all the great religious and philosophical traditions which have existed since time began, and all that shall exist in the future. Each of the great mystics included in this book spoke in his own language, his own restricted terminology, and the consequence is that today many regard each of these efforts to reveal the nature of reality as disparate and unrelated “philosophies” or “religions.” But the experience of the one Reality is the same for all, of course; and in all the declarations of the many prophets, saints, and messiahs, we can hear the attempt to convey a common knowledge based on that common vision.

We have seen, also, that each of the mystics who have attempted to describe the reality experienced in this vision have described it, in a similar way, as an indivisible Unity containing two, *apparently distinct*, aspects: an eternally unchanging and constant aspect, and an aspect that appears changing and inconstant. To those who have never experienced that Unity, such declarations about It must appear illogical and self-contradictory. But, say the mystics, however paradoxical it may seem to the rational intellect, that is simply and truly the nature of the one reality.

In order to explain that reality which is both the eternal God and the world of forms, a reality which appears to possess two such incompatible aspects while remaining one reality, it became apparent very early on, historically, that it was necessary to introduce two terms, each to designate one aspect of this dual-faceted Being, yet which would in no way represent two separate and distinct entities, but one— a One with two faces. In every language, therefore, and in every religious and philosophical tradition, we find these two, designated as Male and Female, and called by countless different names. Here, listed according to their source, are just a few of these many sets of terms:

| <u>Source</u> | <u>The One</u> | <u>Its Creative Power</u> |
|---------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Vedas | Prajapati | Prthivi |
| Judaism | Jahveh | Chokmah |
| Upanishads | Brahman | Maya |

| | | |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Samkhya | Purusha | Prakrti |
| Taoism | Tao | Teh |
| Buddhism | Nirvana | Samsara |
| Heraclitus | Zeus | Logos |
| Philo | Theos | Logos |
| Jesus | Father | Mother |
| Christianity | Father | Son (Logos) |
| Gnosticism | Mind | Thought |
| Plotinus | The One | Nous |
| Shaivism | Shiva | Shakti |
| Chan/Zen Buddhists | Hsin/Kokoro | Nien/Nen |
| Kabbalists | En Sof | Sefirot |
| Sufis | Haqq | Khalq |
| Eckhart | Gottheit | Gott |
| Ramakrishna | Brahman | Kali |

The history of both religion and philosophy has all too often told the story of the struggles of the proponents of one set of these terms to establish supremacy over the proponents of another set of terms. But since each set of terms is synonymous with the others, let us, for the moment at least, in the interest of avoiding the confusion of multiple terminologies, agree to select one of these sets of terms for our present use. Let us use the terms, “Shiva” and “Shakti,” with the understanding that we might just as readily use any others of the combinations of terms listed above.

As the mystics tell us, the universe is a manifestation of an insubstantial, creative Energy. This Energy, or Shakti, has no independent existence of its own, but is simply a “projection” of pure Consciousness, or Shiva; and is similar to the thought-energy projected in the form of a dream-image by an individual mind. Thus, Shiva and Shakti—the transcendent Absolute and the Energy, which manifests as the phenomenal world—are simply polar aspects of the same one and only Being. These two are not even a hair’s breadth apart; they are but two different perspectives on the same reality. And the duality created by conceptually dividing Shiva from Shakti is only an apparent and artificial one, as they constitute an indivisible unity.

This complementarity of Shiva and Shakti may be illustrated by an analogy with the ocean and its waves: Consider an infinite ocean; if we regard its “water-ness,” the ocean is one constant whole. But if we regard its “wave-ness,” that same ocean is a multiplicity of incessantly changing forms. The ocean is the one reality that is

manifesting as all the waves; and, though the waves form and dissolve, form and dissolve, the ocean as a whole remains the same, continually unchanged and unaffected. This is exactly what the mystic experiences in his awakening to the universal Self; he appears to be but one of the many manifestations of reality, but he is, in fact, the one Reality Itself, forever unchanging, eternal.

Shankara, the great expounder of the philosophy of unity, called this apparent duality between the many and the One, a “superimposition”:

“Like ripples on the water, the worlds arise from, exist in, and dissolve into, the supreme Lord, who is the material cause and support of everything.

“The manifested world of plurality is superimposed upon the eternal, all-pervading Lord whose nature is Existence-Consciousness, just as bangles and bracelets are superimposed on gold. ²

Another way of explaining the “superimposition” of the phenomenal world on God is by analogy with the ordinary experience of the superimposition of a thought or mental image upon one’s own consciousness. Notice how a thought is superimposed upon the background of pure mental awareness: the projected thought has a definite reality of its own, albeit a temporary one; and yet it does not mar or alter in any way that background consciousness. The thought-form or image and the background consciousness exist simultaneously, with a definite distinction between them; however, the thought is formed not only *on* consciousness, but *of* consciousness—just as a wave is formed not only on, but of, the ocean.

All the mystics concur that it is in a way very similar to this that the phenomenal world of forms is projected upon the supreme Consciousness. The world and God are separate and distinct, but the world has no independent existence; it is formed not only on, but of, God. In the mystic’s vision, one’s own body is recognized for what it really is: a form whose substance is the universal substance; and one’s consciousness is recognized for what it really is: the only Consciousness that is. And then one knows that he has no other, nor ever had any other, identity but the One who alone is.

Still, while the ocean is the only reality underlying the waves, the waves *do* exist. No one would deny it. It is equally undeniable that, while that pure Consciousness (Shiva) is the only reality underlying all forms of life, individual beings *do* exist. Clearly, we live simultaneously in two frameworks of reality: that of the divisible world of multiple phenomena, and that of the eternal Self, the unbroken Whole. All the great issues and arguments of science, philosophy and theology are solved

in one stroke by the understanding of the dual-sidedness of reality. From the standpoint of my Shakti-identity, my life in the universal drama is fixed and determined; from the standpoint of my Shiva-identity, as the eternal Self, I am ever free, and remain unaffected by the changes taking place within the manifested world. When I identify with my Shakti-form, I am Shiva's servant; I worship Him as my Lord. When I identify with Shiva, my eternal Self, there are not two, but only one; and I am He.

This complementarity of identities necessitates two entirely different mental attitudes, or states of awareness: when we focus on the Self, we become aware, "I am the one infinite Existence-Consciousness-Bliss"; but when we take the attitude of love toward God, we become aware, "I am Thy creature and Thy servant, O Lord." And it is the paradoxical fact that both attitudes are correct and valid which accounts for the confused oscillation many dedicated truth-seekers feel between the attitude of Self-knowledge (*jnan*) and devotion to God (*bhakti*).

To say, "I am He," as did al-Hallaj, or Shankara, is offensive to the *bhakta*, for it denies the separate existence and fallibility of the individual soul; and to say, "I am the servant of God," does not satisfy the *jnani*, for it asserts a duality where none in fact exists. I am convinced that, if we are to speak truly and to live realistically, it is necessary to embrace *both* attitudes, and to relinquish the logic, which begs for an either/or approach to identity. The greatest contemplatives who ever lived, having pondered this quandary, have come to the same conclusion, and have taken a position which defies categorization into one classification or another. For example, the Blessed Jan Ruysbroeck, a 14th century disciple of Meister Eckhart, wrote:

"Though I have said before that we are one with God, ...yet now I will say that we must eternally remain other than God, and distinct from Him. ...And we must understand and feel *both* within us, if all is to be right with us." ³

And in the following song of Kabir, we can hear the perfect blending of the devotion of the *bhakta* and the unitive knowledge of the *jnani*:

"Whatever I utter is His Name;
 Whatever I hear reminds me of Him.
 Whatever I eat or drink is to His honor.
 To me, society and solitude are one,
 For all feelings of duality have left me.
 I have no need to practice austerity,
 For I see Him smiling everywhere

As the supreme Beauty in every form.
 Whether sitting, walking, or performing actions,
 My heart remains pure, for my mind remains fixed on God.”⁴

Just as Shiva and Shakti cannot be separated one from the other, neither can the *jnani* and the *bhakta* be separated; though mutually exclusive, they co-exist as complements in everyone. As our knowledge grows, we must learn to adapt our vision of the world to accept and embrace such apparently contradictory views. We must learn to feel comfortable with the notion that a quantity of energy is both a wave and a particle; that our lives are determined, and that we are free; that our identity is both the Whole and the part. We are the universal Self, we are God; and we are also the individualized “soul” which consists of the mind and its own private impressions. We are the Ocean; but we are also the wave.

We are Shiva, but we are also Shakti. We are perfect, but we are also imperfect. We are the eternal Reality, but we are also the ephemeral image It projects on Its own screen. We are indeed the Dreamer, but we are also the dream. We are entitled to say, “I am Shiva!” but so long as the Shakti-mind exists, it must sing the song of love and devotion to its Lord. While we live and move in this phantasmagoria, we are His creatures, and are utterly dependent upon His grace. Therefore, if we truly understand our own double-faceted reality, we must learn to sing two songs: one, the song of our own immortal Self; and the other, the song of love for God. Neither, without the other, is complete.

If we are to learn anything from this protracted examination of the dual-sidedness of our own nature, it is that, if we can but peer beyond the appearance of multiplicity, we can become aware of the unity of all things, the unity and ever-presence of God, the supreme Self. With such a refined vision, we will then be able to see that not only are we the Self, but everything around us is also the Self. The subject is the Self; the object is the Self. Truly, no matter who or what I see or speak to, it is really only my own Self. If we could really grasp the truth of this, what a revolution would occur in our thinking and behavior!

Just as waves on the ocean are only water, just as golden ornaments are only gold, so all the various forms in the universe are only forms of our own Self. Becoming aware of this, we would begin to revel in that joy which had been missing in our lives before. We would begin to drink the nectar of the unending love for which we had been thirsting before. And we would begin to take delight in just being and living and acting in the world in a way we had been unable to before.

The knowledge once gained from an experience of “enlightenment” is a means of escape from any real ensnarement in anxiety or fear from that time on. It is a supramental *knowing* which asserts itself whenever needed, and provides a surety, which can never be shaken. The perceptual division of subject from object does not cease; the world goes on, even for the enlightened. It is just that he *knows* in his heart, with an indomitable certainty, that he and the universe are one.

Just as a chess-player retains the awareness that the warfare between his opponent and himself is merely a temporary game of role-playing, and that at the end of the game both the red and the black pieces will be thrown into the same box; in the same way, one who has clearly experienced the undivided Reality retains the knowledge of the ultimate unity, and sees the play of subjects and objects as the ongoing pretense, or play, of the one Self. Listen to what the 13th century Indian mystic, Jnaneshvar, has to say on this theme:

“There is nothing else here but the Self. Whether appearing as the seen or perceiving as the seer, nothing else exists besides the Self. ...Just as water plays with itself by assuming the forms of waves, the Self, the ultimate Reality, plays happily with Himself. Though there are multitudes of visible objects, and wave upon wave of mental images, still they are not different from their witness. You may break a lump of raw sugar into a million pieces, still there is nothing but sugar. Likewise, the unity of the Self is not lost, even though He fills the whole universe. He is seeing only His own Self—like one who discovers various countries in his imagination, and goes wandering through them all with great enjoyment.” ⁵

But how are we to attain this unitive state of awareness? Until we are lifted into the “experience of unity” by the grace of God, duality must continue to exist for us. When that experience is about to happen to a person, that person’s mind becomes irresistibly withdrawn from worldly concerns, and becomes centered instead upon one all-consuming love, a singular sort of love, for the very source of love within. And in the process of consummating this love, solitude is procured, giving the mind the opportunity to become detached from the pull of distracting thoughts and sense-impressions; and the mind is then focused with great intensity upon its aim. Consciousness, like an unflickering flame in a windless room, becomes pure and clear. And then suddenly it knows who it has always been.

It is God’s grace, which manifests in us as that divine love that draws us so compellingly toward the experience of unity. This love is not the ordinary kind of love between a subject and an object, however; for in this case the subject and the object, and the love itself are one. Nor is this love the result of a conclusion based

on a rational premise; it is an inner experience. It is something quite real—breathtakingly and intoxicatingly real. It stirs from within, and centers on itself within. It is not a rationally thought-out construction based on philosophical principles, but a sweetness that is itself the object of devotion. It is this Love that bhaktas love. It has no location but the human heart, yet its source is the universal Being. It is His gracious gift, and only those who have experienced it know what it is.

It is of this love that Ramakrishna sang:

“How are you trying, O my mind, to know the nature of God?
You are groping like a madman locked in a dark room.
He is grasped through ecstatic love;
How can you fathom Him without it?
When that love awakes, the Lord, like a magnet, draws to Him the
soul.”⁶

Such longing for God always precedes the experience of enlightenment, because it is the natural expression, the unfailing indicator, of a shift in consciousness toward the transcendent Unity. All of the outer events as well as the inner ones will conspire to bring one’s life to that point where enlightenment is experienced. When it is time for it to come, it will produce itself, and it will announce its coming by a great wave of love that steers the heart irresistibly to the source of that love, and eventually reveals itself unaided from within.

Consider the great Shankara’s final message to the disciple in his *Vivekachudamani*:

“Gurus and scriptures can stimulate spiritual awareness, but one crosses the ocean of ignorance only by direct illumination, *through the grace of God*.”⁷

No one has ever realized God except those to whom He has revealed Himself. On this point all Self-realized beings are unanimously agreed. As one commentator says in the *Malini Vijaya Vartika*: “The learned men of all times always hold that the descent of grace does not have any cause or condition but depends entirely on the free will of the Lord.” If it were dependent upon conditions, it would not be absolute and independent grace. According to yet another Tantric scripture, the *Tantraloka*, “Divine grace leads the individual to the path of spiritual realization. It is the only cause of Self-realization and is independent of human effort.”

The experience of Self-realization occurs when the mind is concentrated to a fine laser-point and focused in contemplation of God; but this happens only by the

power of the universal Self, of God Himself. This is not a denial of the efficacy of self-effort, but merely an assertion that every effort or desire to remember Him, every intensification of concentration on Him, is instigated by Himself, for He is our own inner Self, the inner Controller. It is He who inspires, enacts, and consummates all our efforts.

Among the Christian mystics, we find complete agreement on this issue. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, for example, says: “You would not seek Him at all, O soul, nor love Him at all, if you had not been first sought and first loved.” Meister Eckhart also acknowledges this truth, saying: “It is He that prays in us and not we ourselves.” And the Blessed Jan Ruysbroeck concurs:

“Contemplation places us in a purity and radiance which is far above our understanding, ...and no one can attain to it by knowledge, by subtlety, or by any exercise whatsoever; but he whom God chooses to unite to Himself, he and no other can contemplate God.” ⁸

We find the same agreement among the Sufi mystics, the Hindus and the Buddhists. It is always so—always. And though the attempt is often made by charlatans to translate the description of the mental state of the mystic at the time of his experience of unity into a sort of “method” or “scientific technique” for the attainment of God, no one has ever claimed that such a technique has actually produced the advertised result. For, by themselves, the practices of shallow breathing, fixed stares, and cessation of thought, will never produce the experience of unity. This experience comes only by the will of God. Nanak, the great Guru of the Sikh tradition, stated the matter plainly when he said, “Liberation from bondage depends upon Thy will; there is no one to gainsay it. Should a fool wish to, suffering will teach him wisdom.” ⁹

When He draws the mind to Himself, the mind becomes still automatically. It is not necessary to attempt to still the mind by austere practices or artificial methods. The body becomes still, and the mind becomes still, when the heart is yearning sincerely for Him alone. Everything happens very naturally by His grace: One begins to begrudge the mind any thought other than the thought directed to God; and, with the aim of centering the mind continually on Him, one begins to sing His name in the inner recesses of the mind. It doesn’t matter what name is used; Christians call Him “Father”; Muslims call Him “Allah,” or “Karim”; Jews call Him “Adonai”; and Hindus call Him “Hari” or “Ram.” Love responds to whatever name is called with love. To one who loves, His name is nectar; it is like a cold drink of water to a thirsty man. It is no discipline, nor is it an austerity. It is the refreshment of life. It is the sweetness of peace, and the delight of delights.

Since there is really nothing else but that infinite Being wherever one may look, that awareness dawns, as one begins to sing the name of God within the heart; and the bliss of recognizing one's own Self both without and within begins to well up. The more one sings His name, the more one revels in that bliss, and the more clearly one perceives His continual presence. Inherent in that perception is all mercy, all right judgment, all tenderness, all loving-kindness. It is the natural devotion by which a man's heart is transformed, and by which he becomes fit for the vision of God.

Therefore, say the mystics, we must forge our link with God, and He will lead us to Himself. He will draw us to love Him, for He Himself is that Love that awakens in us as love for God. He will draw us to seek Him in prayer and in silent longing, for He is our own heart. Follow, and you will reach Him. Draw near to Him in the silence of the night and He will reveal Himself to you as your very deepest Self, your eternal Identity. Keep on loving Him, keep on trusting in Him to guide you, and keep on praying to Him. When He puts into your heart the desire to know Him, He will lift aside the veil and reveal that, all along, it was Him who prayed, who sought, who sorrowed, as you; and that, all along, it was you who forever lives beyond all sorrow, as God—forever blissful, forever free.

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NOTES:

1. Reprinted from Abhayananda, Swami., *History of Mysticism*, Fallsburg, N.Y., Atma Books, 1987.
2. Shankara, *Atma Bodha*, 8-9.
3. Jan Ruysbroeck, *The Sparkling Stone*, X
4. Kabir; Shastri, H.P. (trans.), *Indian Mystical Verses*, London, Shanti Sadan, 1941; p. 495.
5. Jnaneshvar, *Amritanubhav*; VII; Abhayananda, Swami, Olympia, Wash., Atma Books, 1989.
6. Nikhilananda, Swami (trans.), *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, N.Y., Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, 1942; p. 607
7. Shankara, *Vivekachudamani*, Prabhavananda, Swami, *The Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*, Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1947, p. 131.
8. Jan Ruysbroeck, *The Sparkling Stone*, IV
9. Nanak, Singh, Trilochan, et al, *Selections from The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1960, p. 42.

* * *

8. Historical Roots of Western Mysticism (from *Mystical Theology*, 2012)

From what we presently know, a mystical theology first appeared in India with the writings that were later gathered into the collection that we now call the *Upanishads* (ca. 800-500 B.C.E.), and in the chapter of the epic *Mahabharata* that we know as the *Bhagavad Gita* (ca. 500 B.C.E.). It is possible that this Eastern mystical literature influenced the mysticism of the early Greek philosophers, but it is also possible that a mystical theology arose in Greece independently. There is no way to know for sure. Though the Buddha lived and taught around this same time, there was no Buddhist literary representation until many centuries thereafter; and the Biblical literature of the Middle Eastern Jews, whose culture was somewhat closed to outside influences, shows no clear signs of a mystical strain at any time, until the accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus written by his followers in the first and second centuries—and even then, his mysticism was widely unrecognized and misinterpreted. The most easily traced early historical development of a mystical theology is that appearing in Greece in the Platonist and Neoplatonist traditions, and it is that development which we shall here consider.

Since the beginning, men have been gathering knowledge about the world in which they live in the effort to answer such questions as: ‘Where did this world come from?’ ‘Who made it?’ and ‘What is it made of?’ The earliest efforts to formulate a cosmogony came in the form of simple stories, myths, which were necessarily vague. Hesiod’s *Theogony* (7th or 8th century B.C.E.), for example, posited the originating agent as “Chaos”, a primordial abysmal condition from which all else mysteriously arose. But, by the 6th century B.C.E., enquiring minds had become a bit more sophisticated; and as the ancient philosopher, Xenophanes (580-480 B.C.E.) observed, “Not at first did the gods reveal all things to mortals, but in time, by inquiring, they make better discoveries.” And this gathering of knowledge through ‘better discoveries’ tended to be cumulative over the ages, though inquiry led only very slowly and laboriously toward a true understanding.

It had been clear, even to men of more primitive societies, that mind and matter, soul and body, were two very different categories of being. Then, as now, men struggled to understand the nature of the material world and the nature of their minds or souls as well. In answer to the question, ‘What is the world made of?’ ancient Greek thinkers, like Thales or Anaximenes, became convinced that everything in the sensible world was made from water or from air, respectively. But these theories were unsatisfying, and the search for the ultimate irreducible ‘stuff’ composing all matter continued in earnest during those early centuries with

little success. For some thinkers, it had become increasingly evident that *in addition* to the physical world, the world of ‘nature’, there had to be an intelligent cause *behind* the manifestation and development of this complex and manifold universe. Matter itself was devoid of life and awareness; there had to be an intelligent Cause of this universe, pervading, guiding and developing the intricacies of its design, and accounting for the inherent life and consciousness of mankind and of all living creatures.

At first, the early poets and mythologizers, such as Hesiod and Homer, dreamed up gods who were styled after mankind, possessing both the noble and the ignoble characteristics of mortal men and women. But there were some who contemplated a God who was incorporeal and all-pervading, an eternal, noumenal Reality whose consciousness filled the entire Cosmos.

Xenophanes (580-480 B.C.E.) was one of those who, whether he had experienced it in vision or simply inferred it through his faculty of reason, thought that there *was* a non-material, i.e., supernatural, cause behind this world of sense experience, who exists within the world as the Intelligent creator, guide and controller. He said:

“There is one God, among gods and men the greatest, not at all like mortals in body or in mind. He sees as a whole and hears as a whole. And without toil He sets everything in motion, by the thought of His mind. And He always remains in the same place, not moving at all, nor is it necessary for Him to change His place at different times.”¹

A contemporary of Xenophanes who knew something of the Divine Thought pervading the universe was Heraclitus (540-480 B.C.E.), who, utilizing the Greek word, “logos”, to represent that all-pervading Intelligence, gave eloquent expression to his philosophical vision. Indeed, Heraclitus seems to have experienced a personal mystical vision, revealing to him the one Mind whose presence (as *Logos*) fills the entire universe, and who comprises the underlying identity of all men. However, due to the ignorance of unenlightened commentators, of whom there are always plenty, Heraclitus was much misunderstood and maligned, both in his own time and ever since. But judge his vision for yourself; here is a reconstruction of Heraclitus’ thought, based on existing fragments from his book, *On Nature*:

“I have explained the Logos, but men are always incapable of understanding it, both before they have heard it, and after. For, though all things come into being in accordance with the Logos, when men

hear it explained—how all things are made of it, and how each thing is separated from another according to its nature—they seem unable to comprehend it. The majority of men are as unaware of what they are doing after they wake from sleep as they are when asleep ²...Everyone is ruled by the Logos, which is common to all; yet, though the Logos is universal, the majority of men live as if they had an identity peculiar to themselves. ³ ...Even when they hear of the Logos, they do not understand it, and even after they have learnt something of it, they cannot comprehend; yet they regard themselves as wise. ⁴

“Those who believe themselves wise regard as real only the appearance of things, but these fashioners of falsehood will have their reward. ⁵ Though men are inseparable from the Logos, yet they are separated in it; and though they encounter it daily, they are alienated from it. ⁶ What intelligence or understanding do they have? They believe the popular orators and are guided by the opinions of the populace; they do not understand that the majority of men are fools, and the wise few. ⁷

“Of all the wise philosophers whose discourses I have heard, I have not found any who have realized the one Intelligence, which is distinct from all things, ⁸ and yet pervades all things. ⁹ That Intelligence is One; to know It is to know the Purpose, which guides all things and is in all things. ¹⁰ Nature has no inherent power of intelligence; Intelligence is the Divine. ¹¹ Without It, the fairest universe is but a randomly scattered dust-heap. ¹² If we are to speak with intelligence, we must found our being on THAT which is common to all. ...For that Logos, which governs man, is born of the One, which is Divine. It [the Divine] governs the universe by Its will and is more than sufficient to everyone. ¹³

“One should not conjecture at random about the Supreme [Truth]. ¹⁴ The eyes are better witnesses to the truth than the ears; ¹⁵ but the eyes and ears are bad witnesses for men if their souls cannot understand. ¹⁶ You could not in your travels find the source or destination of the soul, so deeply hidden is the Logos. ¹⁷ [But] I searched for It [and found It] within myself. ¹⁸ That hidden Unity is beyond what is visible. ¹⁹ All men have this capacity of knowing themselves, ²⁰ [for] the soul has the Logos within it, which can be known when the soul is evolved. ²¹ What is within us remains the same eternally; It is the same in life and

death, waking and sleeping, youth and old age; for, It has become this world, and the world must return to It. ²²

“The best of men choose to know the ONE above all else; It is the famous “Eternal” within mortal men. But the majority of men are complacent, like well-fed cattle. ²³ They revel in mud; ²⁴ like donkeys, they prefer chaff to gold. ²⁵ [The Eternal is attained only by those who seek It with all their desire;] for if one does not desire It, one will not find the Desireless, since there is no trail leading to It and no path. ²⁶ Such a man is satiated with things seen and kindles his inner light during the night. While living, he is like a dead man; while awake, he is like a man asleep. ²⁷ But such men, the best of men, are one in ten thousand.²⁸

“You needn’t listen to me; listen to the Logos [within]. When you do, you will agree that all things are One.²⁹ This ordered universe, which is the same for all, was not created by any one of the gods or by man, but always was, is, and shall be, [similar to] an ever-living Flame that is first kindled and then quenched in turn.³⁰ [The universe bursts forth and then is reabsorbed, yet its Source is ever-living, like a Sun that never sets;] and who can hide from that which never sets? ³¹ [That eternal Intelligence in man] is forever beyond change; ³² [It is God.] To God all things are beautiful, good and just, but men see some things to be just, and others unjust. ³³

“One should understand that the world appears by the opposition of forces; order exists in the world by this play of contraries.³⁴ We would never have heard of “right” if we did not know of “wrong;” ³⁵ whole and not-whole, united-separate, consonant-dissonant, —all these are interdependent.³⁶ [But] in the One, above and below are the same, ³⁷ [just as] beginning and end are one in the circumference of a circle. ³⁸ That which is in conflict is also in concert; while things differ from one another, they are all contained in the most beautiful Unity. ³⁹

“[Yet the philosophers cannot understand this;] they do not understand how that which contains differences within it is also in harmony, how Unity consists of opposing forces within Itself, just as the strings of a bow or a lyre [produce harmony while being pulled by opposing forces.] ⁴⁰

“[When one’s mind becomes stilled, the soul separates from the world-appearance;] just as a mixture of wine and barley meal separates when it is not stirred. ⁴¹ [The impulses of the mind must be stilled;] though it is difficult to fight against impulse. [The impulses of desire arise, but] whatever the mind wishes, it purchases at the expense of the soul. ⁴²

[Such desires feed on pride and arrogance, and] it is a greater task to quench one’s own arrogance than it is to quench a raging fire. ⁴³ Pride is the greatest hindrance to the progress of the soul. ⁴⁴ Moderation is the greatest virtue, and wisdom is to speak the truth and to act in accordance with nature, while continuously attending to one’s own Self. ⁴⁵ [A man should see to his own character,] for a man’s character is his destiny.” ⁴⁶

Not long thereafter, Anaxagoras (500-428 B.C.E.) came to a similar conclusion. The universe, he said, began as a primordial, undifferentiated and chaotic mass—he doesn’t even attempt to guess at its origin; but he states that this chaotic mass was then arranged and organized by “Thought”. He doesn’t say “Divine Thought” or “the Thought of God”, but that is clearly what he intended. He speaks of a “limitless and independent Thought” that is:

“the finest of all things and the purest, and it possesses all knowledge about everything, and it has the greatest strength. And Thought has power over all those things, both great and small, which possess soul. ...And Thought knows everything ...what was to be and what was and what now is and what will be. ...Thought has power over whatever exists and now is where the other things also are [i.e., it permeates all things].” ⁴⁷

Socrates (469-399 B.C.E.) was a contemporary of Anaxagoras and was the student and beneficiary of all previous philosophical enquiry. It seems that he had also been the beneficiary of a personal mystical vision in which the Divine had made itself known to him. However, since he wrote nothing, but preferred to teach men face to face, we must rely upon his student, Plato (d. 347 B.C.E.), for our knowledge of his thought. Plato’s various *Dialogues* purport to be conversations between Socrates and his many admirers; but it is impossible to separate out the thought of Socrates from the thought of Plato; and so, we must treat them as one.

By the time of Plato, belief in the *Psyche*, or “Soul” as the eternal and incorporeal essence of one’s being was implicit, as was the belief in the soul’s ability to reincarnate. Plato saw the soul as tripartite, being made up of *logos*, the mind or reason; *thymos*, emotion; and *eros*, or desire. For both Socrates and Plato, Soul was seen as the entire inner consciousness of man, synonymous with the very fact of life. It was soul that gave life to the body, and without which the body was merely a corpse. It was Plato who introduced Socrates’ idea that, through introspection, a man’s soul was able to ascend in spirit and directly perceive and know the Divinity within himself; and it was for that reason that Socrates had so emphasized the need to care primarily for “the greatest improvement of the soul.”

Here are a few illustrative excerpts from the Dialogues of Plato that purport to be the words of Socrates:

“As for the sovereign part of the human soul, we should consider that God gave it to be the Divinity in each one, it being that which, inasmuch as we are a plant not of an earthly but a heavenly growth, raises us from earth to our brethren in heaven.

“When one is always occupied with the cravings of desire and ambition which he is eagerly striving to satisfy, all his thoughts must be mortal, and, as far as it is possible to become such, he must be mortal every whit, because he has made great his mortal part. But he who has been earnest in the love of knowledge and true wisdom and has exercised his intellect more than any other part, must have thoughts immortal and divine. If he attains Truth, in so far as human nature is capable of sharing in immortality, he must altogether be immortal. And since he is ever cherishing the divine power, and has duly honored the Divinity within, he will be supremely happy. ⁴⁸

“The true lover of knowledge is always striving after Being—that is his nature; he will not rest at those multitudinous particular phenomena whose existence is in appearance only, but he will go on—the keen edge will not be blunted, nor the force of his passion abate until he have attained the knowledge of the true nature of all essence by a sympathetic and kindred power in the soul. And by that power, drawing near and becoming one with very Being, ...he will know and truly live and increase. Then, and only then, will he cease from his travail. ⁴⁹

“The immortality of the soul is demonstrated by many proofs; but to see it as it really is—not as we now behold it, marred by communion

with the body and other miseries—you must contemplate it with the eye of reason in its original purity; and then its beauty will be revealed.⁵⁰ ...When a person starts on the discovery of the Absolute by the light of the reason only, without the assistance of the senses, and never desists until by pure intelligence he arrives at the perception of the absolute Good, he at last finds himself at the end of the intellectual world...⁵¹

“Of that Heaven which is above the heavens what earthly poet ever did or ever will sing worthily? It is such as I will describe; for I must dare to speak the truth, when Truth is my theme. There abides the very Being with which true knowledge is concerned; the colorless, formless, intangible Essence visible only to mind, the pilot of the soul. ... Every soul which is capable of receiving the food proper to it rejoices at beholding Reality. ...She beholds Knowledge absolute, not in the form of generation or of relation, which men call existence, but Knowledge absolute in Existence absolute.⁵²

“To find the Father and Maker of this universe is most difficult, and, to declare Him, after having found Him, is impossible.⁵³

“A man must have knowledge of the Universal, formed by collecting into a unity by means of reason the many particulars of sense; this is the recollection of those things which our soul once saw while following God—when, regardless of that which we now call being, it raised its head up towards true Being. And, therefore, the mind of the philosopher alone has wings; and this is just, for he is always, as far as he is able, clinging in recollection to those things in which God abides, and in beholding which, he is what He [God] is. And he who employs aright these memories is ever being initiated into perfect mysteries and he alone becomes truly perfect. But since he stands apart from human interests and is rapt in the Divine, the vulgar deem him mad and do not know he is inspired.⁵⁴

“He who would be dear to God must, as far as is possible, become like Him. Wherefore the temperate man and the just is the friend of God, for he is like Him. And this is the conclusion—that for the good man to ... continually hold converse with God by means of prayers and every kind of service, is the noblest and the best of things, and the most conducive to a happy life.⁵⁵

“This is that life above all others which man should live, ...holding converse with the true Beauty, simple and divine. In that communion only beholding Beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but Reality [Itself]; ...and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue, to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may. Would that be an ignoble life?”⁵⁶

For all his high-mindedness, and his great effect on all subsequent philosophy, Plato gives no indication in his writings that he himself had experienced the unitive knowledge of God. In fact, he departed from the simple ideas of Xenophanes, Heraclitus and Anaxagorus regarding the guidance and direction of the universe by means of Divine Thought, emphasizing instead the theory of the dependence of all objects in the material world upon the intelligible *Forms*, or *Ideas* (*ideai*), that he saw as constituting their archetypal essence and reality. This theory was born, however, not of mystical vision, but of Plato’s speculative imagination.

Democritus (468 B.C.E.-?), though not a mystic, nonetheless plays a minor role in our story. He was a contemporary of Socrates, though not of his circle. He wrote many books, on many subjects, none of which has survived; but he is best known for anticipating our current atomic theory. He, and perhaps his teacher, Leucippus as well, held that all things are made of tiny entities of many geometric shapes, imperceptible to the senses, which he called “atoms”—meaning ‘irreducible elements’. Though he had no means of discovering or proving this through empirical means, he nonetheless hit upon a conception that seemed reasonable at the time, and which, only twenty-five hundred years later would be shown to be, if not wholly accurate, an amazingly prescient theory of the atomic nature of matter, the intricacies of which were ferreted out in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of our current era. Of course, Democritus could not have dreamed that these tiny ‘irreducible elements’ were really electrically charged wave-particles formed of the intense energy of the Light that created the universe.

Philo Judaeus (20 B.C.E. to 40 C.E.), an Alexandrian Jew of the first century, was a follower of Plato; but he didn’t subscribe to Plato’s concept of the individual *Forms* or *Ideas* underlying each physical object. Rather, he saw the *Idea* of the universe as inhering entire in the Divine Mind, and which, borrowing from Heraclitus and the Stoics, he called the *Logos*. Philo explains, in the Platonist manner, that God has two aspects: the transcendent, of which nothing at all can be said; and the immanent aspect, the *Logos*, by which He is the governing Thought or Idea filling all the material universe:

“God is high above place and time ...He is contained by nothing but transcends all. *But though transcending what He has made, nonetheless, He filled the universe with Himself.* [My italics.] ...When, therefore, the God-loving soul searches into the nature of the Existent, he enters on a quest of That which is beyond matter and beyond sight. And out of this quest there accrues to him a great boon—to comprehend the incomprehensible God.” ⁵⁷

The *Logos*, as Philo describes it, is the Idea in the mind of God which is the archetypal pattern from which the design of all the physically manifested universe is produced. It is, in effect, the directive and organizational Intelligence of God that permeates all matter, bringing all into conformity with Its will and design. For Philo, God *thinks* the universe; He is continually *thinking* the universe. It is this underlying Thought which is the *Logos* of God, the subtle guide and governor of the material universe of our experience.

“The supremely generic is God, the next is the Logos of God; ⁵⁸ ...That which comes after God, even if it were the most venerable of all other things, holds second place, and was called feminine in contrast to the Creator of the universe, who is masculine. ⁵⁹

“That aspect of Him which transcends His powers cannot be conceived of at all in terms of place, but only as pure Being; but that power of His (the Logos) by which He made and ordered all things ...pervades the whole and passes through all the parts of the universe.” ⁶⁰

Philo had experienced the unitive vision, and understood the spiritual foundation of our world; and he knew that that vision was not of his own making, but was a gift of God’s grace:

“Without Divine grace it is impossible to leave the ranks of mortality; [but] when grace fills the soul, it is possessed and inspired, ...and hastens to that most glorious and loveliest of visions, the vision of the Uncreated.⁶¹ The soul, stirred to its depths and maddened by heavenward yearning, [is] drawn by the truly Existent Being and pulled upward by Him. ⁶²

“It is the characteristic of him who would see God not to leave the holy warfare without his crown, but to persevere till he reaps the prize of victory. And what victory garland more fitting or woven of rarer

flowers than the clear and unalloyed vision of Him who IS. It is a worthy conflict that lies before the striving soul: to win eyes for the clear vision of Him Whom alone it is worth man's while to see.⁶³ ...Go up, then, O soul, to the vision of Him who IS—go up quietly, mindfully, willingly, fearlessly, lovingly⁶⁴...[for] to know God is the highest happiness, and immortal life.⁶⁵ ...It is worth more than all wealth, private or public. For if the sight of elders or holy teachers, rulers or parents, moves one to reverence and modesty and zeal for a pure life, how great a support for virtue in our soul shall we find, who have learnt to pass beyond all things created, and to see That which is uncreated and divine, the highest good, the greatest Joy; nay, to speak the truth, That which is greater than the greatest, more beautiful than the greatest beauty, more blessed than the most blessed, more joyful than the joyfulest; aye, more perfect than any words such as these [can tell].”⁶⁶

The Wisdom of Solomon, an apocryphal book of the Bible,⁶⁷ written around the same time and place in which Philo flourished, speaks of the governing Spirit of God as *Sophia*, or “Wisdom.” Wisdom, according to the anonymous author of this book, is “the artificer of all; ...[she] pervades and permeates all things...”

“She is an exhalation from the [creative] power of God, a pure effluence from the glory of the Almighty; therefore, nothing tainted insinuates itself into her. She is an effulgence of everlasting light, an unblemished mirror of the active power of God, and an image of His goodness. Though but one, she can do everything, and abiding in herself she renews all things; ...She is brighter than the sun and surpasses every constellation; compared to the light of day she is found more radiant; ...She stretches in might from pole to pole and effectively orders all things.”⁶⁸

According to this unknown author, *Wisdom* is the breath of God by which the universe comes into being; it is a breath of “everlasting light”, more radiant than the sun and all the constellations, that forms and effectively orders all things. Philo and the author of *The Wisdom of Solomon* are in full agreement that the Divine Mind (as *Logos/Sophia*) directs, orders and controls every facet of the material universe. It is also she who graces the pure-hearted, bringing them to enlightenment through union with herself.

“She is an inexhaustible treasure for mankind, and those who acquire it attain friendship with God, commended by the gift derived from her

instruction. ...I learned both what is hidden and what is manifest, for *Wisdom*, the artificer of all, taught me. ⁶⁹ ...Generation by generation she enters into holy souls and renders them friends of God and prophets ...” ⁷⁰

Like Philo, the author of *The Wisdom of Solomon* appears to have been graced with the vision of God, and he had seen that God breathes the universe into being with a tremendous effluence of light that becomes the vast universe. And that God’s very breath has inherent within it the power and wisdom to fashion matter and to bring the cosmos into order, to initiate life and bring intelligence to mankind. According to him, the material universe, formed of God’s light is governed by His inherent *Wisdom*, by which He organized and arranged the universe, and fashioned all life and mankind to His will. In our modern conception as well, informed as it is by empirical science, we may come to understand that God manifested matter through His emanation of light, and permeated that universe of matter by virtue of His omnipresence, effectively informing all matter, directing its evolution, and fashioning all things according to the coordinated beauty of His design.

Plotinus (205-270 C.E.) is credited with ushering in a new perspective on Platonism—a “Neoplatonism”, based on his own mystical experience, but utilizing the terminology of Plato to give it a familiar expression. Though Plato had hinted of the ascent of the mind (soul) to God, Plotinus was the first to describe that mystical experience of union with the Divine in great detail. Like everyone else prior to the twentieth century, Plotinus was unclear about the origin and nature of matter, but he clearly delineated the spiritual hierarchy to which Plato had pointed. He reiterates and confirms, from his own unitive vision, a transcendent Godhead, an absolute Source of all Being, which he calls “the One”. Arising from that ineffable Godhead is a creative Power, which he calls *Nous*, “The Divine Mind”. The Divine Mind is the executive power of the One; It is God, the Creator, the initiator of the Light that forms the universe. And from that omniscient and omnipotent Power is emanated an extension of Itself, which Plotinus, like Plato, calls *Psyche*, or “Soul”. Soul is the immanent Divine Spirit that permeates the universe, guiding it, inspiring it, and bringing to it life and awareness, and leading each individual soul to awaken to its essential identity as the Divine Mind, its eternal source and Self.

Here are a few choice quotes from **Plotinus**:

Plotinus On The One

“Deriving then from nothing other, entering into nothing other, in no way a comprised thing, there can be nothing above It. We need not,

then, go seeking any other Principles. This—The One and The Good—is our First. Next follows the Divine Mind, [which is] the Primal Thinker. And upon this follows Soul. Such is the order in nature. The Spiritual realm allows no more than these and no fewer.⁷¹

“The One is all things and none of them. The Source of all things is not all things; and yet It is all things in a transcendental sense.”⁷²

“It is infinite by right of being a pure Unity with nothing towards which to direct any partial content. Absolutely One, It has never known measure and stands outside of number, and so is under no limit either in regard to any external or within Itself; for any such determination would bring something of the dual into It. And, having no constituent parts, It accepts no pattern, and forms no shape.

“Reason recognizing It as such a nature, you may not hope to see It with mortal eyes, nor in any way that would be imagined by those who make sense the test of reality and so annul the supremely Real. For what [appears to us and] passes for the most truly existent is most truly non-existent—the thing of extension least real of all—while this unseen First is the source and principle of Being and sovereign over Reality.”⁷³

“He is the First, the Authentic, immune from chance, from blind effect and happening. God is [the] cause of Himself. For Himself and of Himself, He is what He is, the first Self, the transcendent Self.”⁷⁴

Plotinus On The Divine Mind

“There exists a Principle which transcends Being; this is The One, whose nature we have sought to establish insofar as such matters lend themselves to proof. Upon The One follows immediately the Principle which is at once Being and the Divine Mind. Third comes the Principle, Soul. ...Thus, our soul, too, is a divine thing, belonging to another order than sense; ...”⁷⁵

“From such a Unity as we have declared The One to be, how does anything at all come into substantial existence—any multiplicity, dyad, or number? Why has the Primal not remained self-gathered so that there be none of this profusion of the manifold which we observe in existence and yet are compelled to trace to that absolute Unity?”⁷⁶
 ... [In other words, how does there come to be] a universe from an unbroken Unity, in which there appears no diversity, not even duality?

“It is precisely because there is nothing within the One that all things are from It. In order that Being may be brought about, the Source must be no Being but Being’s generator, in what is to be thought of as the primal act of generation. Seeking nothing, possessing nothing, lacking nothing, the One is perfect and, in our metaphor, has overflowed; and Its exuberance has produced something new; [and] this issue has turned again to its begetter and been filled and has become its contemplator and so a Divine Mind.”⁷⁷

“Here [in the Divine Mind] is contained all that is immortal: there is nothing here but Divine Mind; all is God; this is the place of every soul. Here is rest unbroken: for how can that seek change, in which all is well? What need that reach to, which holds all within itself? What increase can that desire, which stands utterly achieved? All its content, thus, is perfect, that itself may be perfect throughout, as holding nothing that is less than the Divine, nothing that is less than Intellective. Its knowing is not by search but by possession, its blessedness inherent, not acquired. For all belongs to it eternally and it holds the authentic Eternity imitated by Time which, circling round the Soul, makes towards the new thing and passes by the old. Soul deals with thing after thing—now Socrates, now a horse: always some one entity from among beings—but the Divine Mind is all and therefore its entire content is simultaneously present in that identity. This is pure Being in eternal actuality. Nowhere is there any future, for every then is a now; nor is there any past, for nothing there has ever ceased to be. Everything has taken its stand forever, an identity well pleased, we might say, to be as it is. And everything, in that entire content, is Divine Mind and Authentic Existence; and the total of all is Divine Mind entire and Being entire.”⁷⁸

“The Divine Mind is the first Act of The Good [the One] and the first Existence; The Good remains stationary within Itself, but the Divine Mind acts in relation to It and, as it were, lives about It. And the Soul, outside, circles around the Divine Mind, and by gazing upon it, seeing into the depths of it, through it, sees God.”⁷⁹

Plotinus On The Soul

“The authentic Reality [the One] gives life to the Intelligible [Spiritual] realm. The Divine Mind is the noblest of Its content, but It contains also souls, since every soul in this lower [earthly] sphere has come from there. *There* is the world of unembodied spirits, while to

our world belong those that have entered body and undergone bodily division. *There* the Divine Mind is a concentrated all; nothing of it is distinguished or divided. And in that unitive realm all souls are concentrated also, with no spatial discrimination.

“The Divine Mind is forever repugnant to distinction and to partition; however, Soul, though without distinction and partition there, has a nature lending itself to divisional existence, and this division is secession, entry into body. [And so] in view of this seceding and the ensuing partition we may legitimately speak of it as a partible thing. But if so, how can it still be described as indivisible?

“[It remains indivisible] in that the secession is not of the entire Soul; something of it holds its ground: that in it which recoils from separate existence. The entity described as “both the undivided soul and the soul divided among bodies,” is a Soul which is at once above and below, attached to the Supreme and yet reaching down to this sphere, like a radius from a center.

“Thus it is, that, entering this [earthly] realm, it possesses still the vision inherent in that superior [indivisible] phase by virtue of which it maintains its integral nature unchanged. Even here [on earth] it is not exclusively the partible soul: it is still the impartible as well.⁸⁰

Soul, therefore, is, in this definite sense, one and many; the Ideal-Form [soul] residing in the body is many and one. Bodies themselves are exclusively many; the Supreme is exclusively one.⁸¹

“The souls of men ...have entered into that realm in a leap downward from the Supreme. Yet even they are not cut off from their origin, from the Divine Mind. It is not that they have come bringing the Spirit down in their fall; it is that though they have descended even to earth, yet their higher part holds forever above the heavens.⁸²

“Let every soul recall ...the truth that Soul is the author of all living things, that it has breathed the life into them all—whatever is nourished by earth and sea, all the creatures of the air, the divine stars in the sky. It is the maker of the sun; itself formed and ordered this vast heaven and conducts all that rhythmic motion. And it is a principle distinct from all these to which it gives law and movement and life, and it must of necessity be more honorable than they, for they gather or dissolve as Soul brings them life or abandons them, but Soul, since it never can abandon itself, is of eternal being.⁸³

“Once pure in the Spirit realm [within the Divine Mind], the soul too possesses that same unchangeableness: for it possesses identity of essence. When it is in that region it must of necessity enter into oneness with the Divine Mind by the sheer fact of its self-orientation, for by that intention all interval disappears; the soul advances and is taken into unison, and in that association, it becomes one with the Divine Mind—but not to its own destruction: the two are one, and [yet] two. In such a state there is no question of stage and change. The soul, motionless, would be intent upon its intellectual act, and in possession, simultaneously, of its self-awareness; for it has become one simultaneous existence with the Supreme.”⁸⁴

Plotinus On The Return

“That which the soul must seek, That which sheds Its light upon the Divine Mind, leaving Its mark wherever It falls, surely we need not wonder if It has the power to draw [all back] to Itself, calling [the soul] back from every wandering to rest before It. From It came all and so there is nothing mightier; all is feeble before It.”⁸⁵

“This Light [from the Highest] shining within the soul enlightens it; that is, it makes the soul intellective, working it into likeness with itself, the Light above. Think of the traces of this Light upon the soul, then say to yourself that such, and more beautiful and broader and more radiant, is the Light itself. Thus, you will approach to the nature of the Divine Mind and the Spirit-realm, for it is this Light, Itself lit from above, which gives the soul its brighter life.”⁸⁶

“We may know we have had the vision when the soul has suddenly taken Light. This Light is from the Supreme and is the Supreme. ...The soul remains unlit without that vision; lit, it possesses what it sought. And this is the true end set before the soul, to take that Light, to see the Supreme by the Supreme and not by the light of any other principle: to see the Supreme which is also the means to the vision; for that which illumines the soul is That which it is to see, just as it is by the Sun’s own light that we see the Sun.

But how is this to be accomplished?

Let all else go.”⁸⁷

“Suppose the soul to have attained: The Highest has come to her, or rather has revealed Its presence; she has turned away from all about

her and made herself apt, beautiful to the utmost, brought into likeness with the Divine by those preparings and adornings which come unbidden to those growing ready for the vision. She has seen that presence suddenly manifesting within her, for there is nothing between. Here is no longer a duality but a two-in-one; for, so long as the presence holds, all distinction fades. It is as lover and beloved here [on earth], in a copy of that union, long to blend. The soul has now no further awareness of being in body and will give herself no foreign name, not man, not living being, not Being, not All. Any observation of such things falls away; the soul has neither time nor taste for them. This she sought and This she has found and on This she looks and not upon herself; and who she is that looks she has not leisure to know.

“Once There she will barter for This nothing the universe holds; not though one would make over the heavens entire to her. There is nothing higher than this, nothing of more good. Above This there is no passing; all the rest, however lofty, lies on the downward path. She is of perfect judgment and knows that This was her quest, that nothing is higher. Here can be no deceit; where could she come upon [something that is] truer than the Truth? And the Truth that she affirms, she is herself; but all the affirmation is later and is silent. In this happiness she knows beyond delusion that she is happy; for this is no affirmation of an excited body but of a soul become again what she was in the time of her early joy. All that she had welcomed of old—office, power, wealth, beauty, knowledge—of all she tells her scorn as she never could, had she not found their better. Linked to This she can fear no disaster, not even if she has had the vision but once. Let everything about her fall to pieces, she wouldn’t mind if only she might be wholly with This, so huge [is] the happiness she has won to.”⁸⁸

It was these early figures, then, who helped to establish the foundations of Western mystical theology that would be reiterated and expanded upon by the Christian and Islamic mystics of later centuries.

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2. Adapted from fragments of Heraclitus found in Freeman, Kathleen, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1983; pp. 24-34. Fragment nbr. 1
3. *Ibid.*, nbr. 2
4. *Ibid.*, 17
5. *Ibid.*, 28
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10. *Ibid.*, 41
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14. *Ibid.*, 47
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19. *Ibid.*, 54
20. *Ibid.*, 116
21. *Ibid.*, 115
22. *Ibid.*, 88
23. *Ibid.*, 29
24. *Ibid.*, 13
25. *Ibid.*, 9
26. *Ibid.*, 18
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45. *Ibid.*, 112
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49. Plato, *Republic*, 490A-B; *Ibid.*
50. Plato, *Republic*, 611B-C; *Ibid.*
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52. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247C-E; *Ibid.*
53. Plato, *Timaeus*, 28C; *Ibid.*
54. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 249C; *Ibid.*
55. Plato, *Laws*, 716C; *Ibid.*
56. Plato, *Symposium*, 212A; *Ibid.*
57. Philo, *De posteritate Caini*, 14-16; Winston, David (trans.), *Philo Of Alexandria—The Contemplative Life, Giants, And Selections*, Ramsey, N.J., Paulist Press, 1981.
58. Philo, *Legum Allegoriorum*, 2:86; *Ibid.*, p. 93
59. Philo, *De uga et inventione*, 50-52, *Ibid.*, p. 93
60. Philo, *De confusione linguarum*, 136-137; *Ibid.*; p. 90
61. Philo, *On Drunkenness*, 145f., 152
62. Philo, *Who Is The Heir?* 69f.
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70. *Ibid.*, 7:27-28.

71. *Enneads*, II.9.1: Against The Gnostics.
72. *Ibid.*, V.2.1: The Origin And Order of The Beings Following On The First.
73. *Ibid.*, V.5.10-11: The Nature of The Good.
74. *Ibid.*, VI.8.14: On Free Will And The Will of The One.
75. *Ibid.*, V.I.10: The Three Initial Hypostases.
76. *Ibid.*, V.1.6: The Three Initial Hypostases.
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79. *Ibid.*, I.8.2: The Nature And Source of Evil.
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83. *Ibid.*, V.1.2-3: The Three Initial Hypostases.
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9. THE TAOIST SAGES

(from *History of Mysticism*, 1987)

The vision of the Eternal was not confined merely to those living in India and the Middle East; we also find a few in ancient China who had experienced an identical realization, and who spoke of the same infinite and eternal Principle underlying the manifested world. However, *That* which the Indian sages called “Brahman” or “Purusha,” what some others call “God,” the Chinese sages called “Tao” (pronounced *Dow*). We must not imagine, as some ignorant people do, that because the languages of various countries are different that there is a difference also in the absolute Reality connoted by these languages. “Taoism” is simply the Chinese name for the one perennial philosophy of all mystics of all lands. It is often seen that those who have only a cursory knowledge of mystical philosophy become confused by the many different terms used to connote the Absolute by peoples of differing languages, and fail to penetrate beyond linguistic differences to grasp the common significance of words like “Brahman,” “Purusha,” “Tao,” “Godhead,” etc. But, just as, in various languages, the words, *pani*, *jal*, *agua*, *eau*, and *water*, all signify one common reality, so do the above words of various linguistic origins connote one common invisible Principle. All of the mystics of whatever time or cultural tradition have experienced the same one, indivisible, Reality; yet, because language is infinitely variable, they have called this One by various appellations.

As we shall see, the sages of Taoism experienced and described the same mystical vision, which has been described by all other mystics; and have described the same mystical philosophy, which goes by the name of “Vedanta” in India, and by so many other names in other lands. As the 15th century Islamic saint, Dadu, put it, in a statement used as the epigraph to this book, “All the enlightened have left one message; it is only those in the midst of their journey who hold diverse opinions.”

Taoism traces its roots in China to sages living as far back as 3000 B.C.E.; but we know of those ancients only from hearsay recorded much later. It was not until the 6th century B.C.E. that the precepts of Taoism were presented in a written form by that most famous of Taoists, Lao Tze, who is said to have been born in 601 B.C.E. We know of his life only the barest of details. It seems he served for some time as the Curator of the Imperial Library at K’au and was therefore a learned man. In later life, he found the burden of his duties and the decadence of city life incompatible with his spiritual needs, and he decided to withdraw from his duties and the city environs to a more peaceful existence in the countryside.

On his journey from the city, he rested for a short while at the pass of Hsien-ku, where he stayed with the Keeper of the pass, a Yin Hsi, who was himself a student of the spiritual life. Before Lao left to continue his journey, Yin Hsi persuaded him to leave for his instruction some writings on the spiritual path, and so Lao wrote a short book of maxims for him. It is this book, which has come down to us as the *Tao Teh Ching*. That is the last we hear of Lao's life; it is not known what became of him or where he died but reports state that he lived to a ripe old age.

Lao's little book, the *Tao Teh Ching*, is one of the major classics of Taoism. The word, *Tao*, in its title, refers to the Eternal aspect of reality—what we have already spoken of as Brahman, or Purusha. *Teh* is Its power of manifestation, identical with Maya or Prakrti. And the word, *Ching*, simply means “book.” So, we may interpret the title of the book as “The Book of The Eternal and Its Power of Manifestation.” Its simple and somewhat cryptic axioms regarding the Spirit, and the way that a man who has realized It lives his life, has become a favorite introduction to the spiritual life for peoples of both East and West. To the beginning student, its apparent vagueness makes it easily digestible, yet as one learns to understand it more thoroughly, its vagueness disappears, and it reveals itself as a profound and explicit metaphysical guide.

Another great Taoist sage is the venerable Chuang Tze, who lived in the 3rd century B.C. E. Very little is known of his life either; we have only the briefest of biographical information in a ‘History’ written in the 2nd century B.C.E. by Sze-ma Khien, which states that Chuang Tze was born in the kingdom of Wei and held some sort of position in the city of Khi-yuan. He grew up in the same part of China as Lao Tze and had thoroughly studied and understood the writings of his great predecessor. At some time during his life, Chuang attained the realization of the Self, the vision of Truth, and began writing books explaining what he had realized. According to Khien's History, King Wei, having heard of Chuang Tze and perhaps having read some of his books, sent a messenger to Chuang with a quantity of silver and the offer of a position as chief minister at the king's court. Chuang Tze, reportedly, only laughed, and sent back this word:

A thousand ounces of silver would be a great gain to me, and to be a high nobleman and minister is a most honorable position. But have you not seen the victim-ox for the ceremonial sacrifice? It is carefully fed for several years and robed with rich embroidery that it may be fit to enter the Grand Temple. Then, when the time comes for it to do so, it would prefer to be a little pig, but it cannot get to be so. So, go away, and do not soil me with your presence. I would rather amuse and enjoy myself in the midst of a filthy ditch than to be subject to the

rules and restrictions in the court of a king. I have determined never to take such an office but prefer the enjoyment of my own free will.¹

Chuang Tze, like Lao Tze, had seen the one Existence, and he lived his life in dedication to the freedom and joy of the Eternal. In his writings, he told of his vision, and his spiritual knowledge. What Lao Tze said in a cryptic and terse manner, Chuang Tze explained often in a lengthy, detailed manner, and sometimes in metaphorical and satirical stories. He wrote large volumes in clear, explanatory prose to clarify what had only been hinted at by Lao Tze. Much of what we know today as “Taoism” is derived from the combined writings of these two seers.

The understanding of the one Reality expressed by the authors of the Upanishads and the *Gita* is expressed in a remarkably similar manner by Lao Tze and Chuang Tze. This should not be surprising, however, since everyone who is graced with the transcendent vision experiences the same eternal Unity. What Lao Tze and Chuang Tze saw and wrote about is precisely what Kapila and the Upanishadic seers and all other mystics have seen and wrote about. Their language is different, but their meaning is the same. As Chuang Tze says, “Words are used to express meaning. When you understand the meaning, you can forget about the words.”

Lao Tze explains, in his *Tao Teh Ching*, that the eternal Reality is a Unity, which contains two aspects: The Eternal, which is the unmanifest *Tao*, and *Teh*, Its Power of manifestation. The *Tao* is the Absolute, devoid of all qualities; nothing can be predicated about It, since It is beyond name and form. Says Lao:

Before heaven and earth existed, there was something unformed, silent, alone, unchanging, constant and eternal; It could be called ‘the Source of the Universe.’ I do not know Its name and simply call It “Tao.”²

...The *Tao* that can be spoken of is not the absolute *Tao*. That Nameless [*Tao*] is the Father of heaven and earth; that which is named [*Teh*] is the Mother of all things.³

Here we have the perennial vision of the mystic; the realization of the two-in-One. The unmanifested Source Lao refers to as the Father of all; and Its Power of world-manifestation he calls the Mother of all things. The two are the same One in Its dual aspects of Unmanifest and manifest. They are not really separate; they are inextricably One. But, in order to describe the One in both Its aspects, they must be given separate names:

These two are the same; they are given different names in order to distinguish between them. Together, they constitute the Supreme Mystery.⁴

Chuang Tze, from his own experience of Unity, corroborates what Lao Tze had said. In one of his stories, he puts these words in the mouth of Lao Tze, when he is asked, “What is the Tao?”

If you want to know the *Tao*, said Lao, give a bath to your mind; wash your mind clean. Throw out all your sage wisdom! Tao is invisible, hard to hold, and difficult to describe. However, I will outline It for you: The visible world is born of the Invisible; the world of forms is born of the Formless. The creative Energy [*Teh*] is born from Tao, and all life forms are born of this creative Energy; thus, all creation evolves into various forms.

...Life springs into existence without a visible source and is reabsorbed into that Infinite. The world exists in and on the infinite Void; how it comes into being, is sustained and once again is dissolved, cannot be seen. It is fathomless, like the Sea. Wondrously, the cycle of world-manifestation begins again after every completion. The Tao sustains all creation, but It is never exhausted. ...That which gives life to all creation, yet which is, Itself, never drawn upon—that is the *Tao*.⁵

If we read for “Tao,” *Brahman* or *Purusha*, and read for “Teh” (the creative Energy), *Prakrti* or *Maya*, we see that the vision of the mystics is ever one. Lao Tze, in his own inimitable style, explained *Tao* and *Teh* in this way:

The *Tao* is an empty cup, yet It is inexhaustible; It is the fathomless Fountainhead of all things.⁶ That which gave birth to the universe may be regarded as the Mother of the universe [*Teh*].⁷ The Womb of creation is called the Mysterious Female; it is the root of heaven and earth.⁸ The myriad objects of the world take form and rise to activity, but I have seen THAT to which they return, like the luxuriant growth of plants that return to the soil from which they spring.⁹

That ONE called *Tao* is subtle, beyond vision, yet latent in It are all forms. It is subtle, beyond vision, yet latent in It are all objects. It is dark and obscure, yet latent in It is the creative Power of life [*Teh*].¹⁰

From the ancient days till now Its manifestation has never ceased; it is because of this [*Teh*] that we perceive the Father of all. It is the

manifestation of forms that reveals to us the Father [*Tao*].¹¹ The *Tao* is never the doer, yet through It everything is done.¹² The *Tao* fathers, and the *Teh* brings everything forth as the world of form, time, and space.¹³

Lao and Chuang extrapolate from this knowledge of the *Tao* the correct life for one who knows It. Thus, *Tao* is not only the Unmanifest, It is also the guiding Path for the sage to whom It is revealed. The *Tao* is both the Source of the universe and the eternal Soul of man; It is his life and the Way by which he lives. He lives as the *Tao* beyond the world, while living as the *Teh* in the midst of it. He identifies with and rests in the Eternal, even while living and acting in the temporal, ephemeral, world:

He who holds to the Eternal [*Tao*] while acting in the transient [*Teh*]; he knows the primal Source from which all things manifest.¹⁴ Therefore, the sage may travel all day, yet he never leaves his store of provisions.¹⁵ He who remains aware of the Male [*Tao*], while living as the Female [*Teh*], is a guide to all the people.¹⁶

The noble man dwells in the Foundation of the form, and not in the form; he dwells in the fruit, and not in the flowering; thus, he holds to the one, and ignores the other.¹⁷ Therefore, he is not vulnerable to weapons of war; the horns of the buffalo cannot touch him; the claws of the tiger cannot rip him; the sword cannot cut him. Why? Because he is beyond death.¹⁸

As the Eternal, the *Tao*, gives birth to all things, “yet does not contain them,” the sage, doing likewise, “does nothing, yet all things are accomplished.” Says Lao:

My teaching is very easy to understand and very easy to practice; yet no one understands it and no one practices it; [it is this:] the sage wears a tattered coat [*Teh*] and carries jade [*Tao*] within his breast.¹⁹

Since the whole universe appears from the Unmoving, the Unchanging, by imitating or adopting the way of the universe, a man carries on his life in the most perfect manner. By retaining his center of inactivity, his center of changelessness, all his actions take place effortlessly of themselves. And, because he holds to the Unmoving, his energy is not dissipated, his mind is clear, and all that he does is done of a concentrated power and efficiency, and with great clarity of mind. Says Lao:

Reach far enough toward the Void, hold fast enough to the Unmoving,
and of the ten thousand things, none can resist you. ²⁰

And Chuang Tze says:

I guard my awareness of the One, and rest in harmony with externals.
... My light is the light of the Sun and the moon. My life is the life of
heaven and earth. Before me is the Undifferentiated [*Teh*], and behind
me is the Unknowable [*Tao*]. Men may all die, but I endure forever. ²¹

Keep correct your form, concentrate your vision, and the heavenly
harmony will come to you. Control your mind, concentrate your
attention, and the Spirit will reside in you. *Teh* is your clothing, and
Tao is your sanctuary. ²²

In the experience of Unity, one learns the nature of Reality, and at the same time,
learns the nature of one's own mind; for, in an inexplicable way, the two are
integrally related. The mind, one discovers, creates thoughts and ideas in a way
similar to the creation of waves on an ocean; they consist of contrary motions, so
that for every wave, there's a trough; for every motion, an equal and opposite
motion. For example, if we love, in that very motion is contained its opposite,
hatred. Or if we experience peace, its corollary, mental agitation, is waiting to
manifest. Every movement of the mind contains its opposite, just as does the
movement of a pendulum; thus, all that we think and experience mentally is but a
play of self-produced opposites. As Lao Tze put it:

When people recognize beauty,
Ugliness is also recognized.
When people recognize good,
Evil is also recognized. ²³

It is only when this alteration, this dual motion of the mind, is stilled, that we can
experience that pure Consciousness which is the source of all thought.

In the very same way, the physical world is produced by the universal Mind. It is
produced by just such a movement of contrary impulses. It is, from this
perspective, a mere mirage; for every form that we see is only an image produced
by the vibratory motions of the elementary Energy. And when that cosmic Mind
becomes stilled, the world-manifestation ceases, and Consciousness rests in Itself.
Then, once again, It re-manifests the universe. In a continuous cycle, of world-
manifestation and de-manifestation, that one Consciousness lives forever,
unmoved, unchanged.

In a previous chapter, we saw how Kapila described this world-manifestation as a play of the *gunas* of *Prakrti*, which consist of two opposing motions, and a state of neutrality resulting from the balancing of the two. Lao Tze and Chuang Tze also recognize the nature of the creative Energy to be constituted of just such opposing movements; they are called by them *yang*, the positive, and *yin*, the negative. The balance of these two opposites is called the “natural” state. Here is how Chuang Tze describes this manifestory process:

In the beginning, even nothing did not exist. There was only the Tao. Then something unnamed which did not yet have form came into existence from the Tao. This is *Teh*, from which all the world came into being. Things had not yet received their forms, but the division of the *yang* (positive) and the *yin* (negative) Principles, which are intimately related, had already appeared. This vibratory motion constitutes all creation. When the *yang* and the *yin* become active, all things come into being. It is in this way that *Teh* created all forms.²⁴

This cosmology is, of course, identical to Kapila’s if we substitute “Purusha” for *Tao*, “*Prakrti*” for *Teh*, and “*rajas*” and “*tamas*” for *yang* and *yin*. For Kapila, the balancing of *rajas* and *tamas* begets *sattva*, the state of repose, wherefrom one could enter into the realization of Purusha, the Eternal. For the two Chinese sages, the balancing of *yang* and *yin* begets the “natural” state of repose, wherefrom one might enter into Tao, the Eternal. The words are different, but the meaning is the same.

“The nature of water,” said Chuang Tze, “is that it becomes clear when left alone, and becomes still when undisturbed.”²⁵ Likewise, the wise man rests in silence, and allows the mind to become pure. In this way the mind reverts to its root, its Source. “To return to the root is repose,” said Lao Tze; “it is called ‘going back to one’s Origin.’” Going back to one’s Origin is to discover the Eternal. And to know the Eternal is to be enlightened.²⁶

“When water is still,” says Chuang, “it becomes so clear that a man can see every hair of his beard in it. ... If water is clear when it is still, how much more so the human spirit! When the mind of the sage is calm, it becomes the mirror of the universe wherein he can see everything.”²⁷

Repose brings good fortune. Without inner repose, your mind will be galloping about, even though you are sitting still. Withdraw your senses within and cease all activity of the mind.

Concentrate your will. Let your ears cease to hear; let your mind cease to imagine. Let your spirit be blank, passively receptive. In such receptivity, the *Tao* is revealed.²⁸

Lao Tze offers similar advice:

The wise man shuts his senses, closes all doors, dulls his edges, unties all knots, softens his light, calms his turmoil—this is called the attainment of unity with the One.²⁹

In yet another passage from the *Tao Teh Ching*, Lao repeats this advice, in a slightly different way:

If you would reveal your original Self, if you would attain union with your true Being, give up your ego, restrain your desires.³⁰ By renouncing of desire, one sees the Secret of all life; without renouncing of desires, one sees the world of manifested forms. Searching within for the ultimate Mystery of this mysterious life, one enters the gateway wherein is found the great Secret of all life.³¹

In just a few simple words, Lao Tze gives the whole of mystical knowledge, and the path to the experience of it. His message is the message of all who have seen the Truth, the Secret of life: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” For only those who have understood the illusory nature of the world and have erased from their hearts all concern or desire for what it has to offer, can turn their hearts and minds wholeheartedly to the Source of the world. It is a simple matter of attention; so long as thoughts continue to be focused on the world of name and form, the mind is not free to dwell singly and purely on the Source of all this manifestation.

He who holds fast to the *Tao* is able to manage very well in the world, for he knows how, from the beginning, all things manifest from the *Tao*.³²

Thus, the sage manages things without acting; teaches the Truth without words. The world continues to arise before him, but he does not reject it. He knows he is the Life of all things, but he does not own any of them. Therefore, he continues to act, but he remains unattached to his actions. His work is accomplished, but he lays no claim to it. The work is done, but he does not identify with it. Thus, his strength is never depleted.³³

How much this sounds like the teaching of Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* regarding the path of karma yoga! If we search the words of Lao Tze and Chuang Tze, we

realize that they taught all the aspects of yoga: *karma* (action), *bhakti* (devotion), *jnan* (discriminative knowledge), and *raja* (contemplation). Jnan yoga, the discrimination between the real and the unreal, the Eternal and the Noneternal, is very well represented by Chuang and Lao Tze:

The pure man sees the One as One and the many as One. So long as he sees the Unity, he is God; when he sees the distinctions, he is man. What marks the pure man is the ability to distinguish between the human and the Divine.³⁴

Do not ask whether the *Tao* is in this or in that; It is in all being. It is for this very reason that we apply to It the title of "Supreme," "the Highest." All that It has made is limited, but It is, Itself, unlimited, infinite. The *Tao* is the source of the activity of universal manifestation, but It is not this activity. It is the Author of causes and effects, but It is not the causes and effects. It is the Author of universal manifestation and dissolution, but It is not the manifestation or dissolution. Everything proceeds from It and is governed by It; It is in all things, but is not identical with things, for It is neither divided nor limited.³⁵

Only he who can see the Formless in the formed arrives at the Truth.³⁶ He rejoices in THAT which can never be lost, but endures forever.³⁷

The precepts of Lao Tze and Chuang Tze and all the later seers of the Tao are in perfect accord with the teachings of all men of spiritual vision. Theirs is but another expression of the perennial wisdom that stems from the mystical vision of Unity. They report what they have seen, and they offer advice on the means to attain that vision, and how to live in this world in accordance with it. They are not mere Quietists, as some would have it, but are illumined sages who had experienced the truth of which they speak and offer their insights as a guide to those who would follow in their footsteps. And their words, for all these centuries, have served to bring solace and understanding to countless generations of seekers after Truth.

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NOTES:

1. Legge, James, *The Texts Of Taoism*, N.Y., Dover Books, 1962; pp. 37-38, Intro.
2. Lao Tze, *Tao Teh Ching*, 25

3. *Ibid.*, 1
4. *Ibid.*, 1
5. Chuang Tze, 22
6. Tao Teh ching, 4
7. *Ibid.*, 52
8. *Ibid.*, 6
9. *Ibid.*, 16
10. *Ibid.*, 21
11. *Ibid.*, 21
12. *Ibid.*, 37
13. *Ibid.*, 51
14. *Ibid.*, 14
15. *Ibid.*, 26
16. *Ibid.*, 28
17. *Ibid.*, 38
18. *Ibid.*, 50
19. *Ibid.*, 70
20. *Ibid.*, 16
21. *Chuang Tze*, Ch. 11
22. *Ibid.*, Ch. 22
23. Tao Teh ching, 2
24. *Chuang Tze*, Ch. 1
25. *Ibid.*, Ch. 5
26. Tao Teh Ching, 16
27. *Chuang Tze*, Ch. 13
28. *Ibid.*, Ch. 4
29. Tao Teh Ching, 56
30. *Ibid.*, 19
31. *Ibid.*, 1
32. *Ibid.*, 14
33. *Ibid.*, 2
34. *Chuang Tze*, Ch. 6
35. *Ibid.*, Ch. 8
36. *Ibid.*, Ch. 23
37. *Ibid.*, Ch. 6

10. The Ch'an And Zen Buddhists (from *History of Mysticism*, 1987)

Buddhism, having originated in India around 500 B.C.E., entered China in the first few centuries of the Current Era, and, for a number of centuries thereafter, vied with Taoism for popular acceptance. Buddhism eventually prevailed, due perhaps to the already decadent condition of Taoism, and the massive proselytizing efforts of the Buddhists. There was really little to choose between the two, however; for, while the Taoist and Buddhist terminologies were different, the realization of Truth which each taught was, of course, the same. In every mystical tradition, the ultimate goal is the attainment of enlightenment, the direct perception of the one Reality. In ancient India, this realization was called *nirvana*, or *samadhi*; when Buddhism was transplanted from India to China, this supramental experience was called, in Chinese, *chien-hsing*, and as Buddhism became established in Japan in later centuries, this experience was called *kensho* or *satori*. The words and the languages are different, but the experience is the same.

This experience of enlightenment, of the absolute, quiescent, Source of all existence, is described by one Chinese Buddhist in this way:

In learning to be a Buddha, and in seeking the essence of the teaching of our school, man should purify his mind and allow his spirit to penetrate the depths. Thus, he will be able to wander silently within himself during contemplation, and he will see the Origin of all things, obscured by nothing.

...His mind becomes boundless and formless, ...all-illuminating and bright, like moonlight pervading the darkness. During that absolute moment, the mind experiences illumination without darkness, clarity without stain. It becomes what it really is, absolutely tranquil, absolutely illuminating. Though this all-pervading Mind is tranquil, the world of cause and effect does not cease; though It illumines the world, the world is but Its reflection. It is pure Light and perfect Quiescence, which continues through endless time. It is motionless, and free from all activity; It is silent, and self-aware. ...That brilliant Light permeates every corner of the world. It is This we should become aware of and know. ¹

Many of the early Buddhist philosophers of India called this absolute, all-pervading Reality, *Dharmakaya*, “the Body of Truth.” Ashvagosha (2nd century C.E.) called it *Sarvasattvachitta*, “the one pure Consciousness in all.” In China, It

was called *Hsin*, “Consciousness”; and in Japan, It was *Kokoro*. According to Ashvagoshā, there arises, in this one pure Consciousness, a spontaneous movement, from which all the phenomenal world is produced; this aspect of Reality, he calls *ekachittakshan*, “the movement of the one Consciousness.” In Chinese, it is *nien*; in Japanese, it is *nen*. Just see how many words there are for our old friends, Brahman and Maya, Purusha and Prakṛti, Shiva and Shakti! Similarly, in every mystical tradition, the means to the realization of Reality is the same; it is an inturning of the mind in search of its root, its source; we call this process “meditation.” In India, the Sanskrit word for meditation is *dhyana*; in China, it is *ch’an*, and in Japan, it is *zen*. Ch’an, or Zen, then, is nothing but the practice of meditation toward the attainment of enlightenment. Enlightenment is the only goal of Zen; and it is meditation, or contemplation, alone which leads to it. For this reason, all the Ch’an and Zen masters incessantly point all sincere seekers of enlightenment to the meditative life. Here is an example of such pointing, from a Sermon by the Ch’an master, Szu-hsin Wu-hsin (1044-1115):

O brothers, to be born as a human being is a rare event, and so is the opportunity to hear discourses on the Truth. If you fail to achieve liberation in this life, when do you expect to achieve it? While still alive, be therefore assiduous in practicing meditation. ...As your self-reflection grows deeper and deeper, the moment will surely come upon you when the spiritual flower will suddenly burst into bloom, illuminating the entire universe.

...This is the moment when you can transform this vast earth into solid gold, and the great rivers into an ocean of milk. What a satisfaction this is then to your daily life! Since this is so, do not waste your time with words or phrases, or by searching for Truth in books; for the Truth is not to be found there. ...They consist of mere words, which will be of no use to you at the moment of your death. ²

This, throughout the centuries, has been the perennial call of the Ch’an and Zen masters. Their message is not different from that of all enlightened seers of the One. The early Ch’an masters of China, having realized the unchanging Absolute, acknowledged the unity of the One and the many, and grappled for some time with the expression of this paradox. Reiterating the old truth of the identity of *nirvana* and *samsara*, they spoke of the Real, the unreal, and the unitive way, which embraces them both in an undivided awareness. But the Chinese had their own way of expressing this duality-in-unity, this unity-in-duality. Here, for example, is a conversation of the Ch’an master, Ts’ao-shan Pen-chi (840-901) and one of his

disciples:

Monk: "Where is the Reality in appearance?"

Master: "Wherever there is appearance, there is Reality."

Monk: "How does It manifest Itself?"

Master: (The master silently lifted his saucer.)

Monk: "But where is the Reality in illusion?"

Master: "The origin of illusion is the Real."

Monk: "But how can Reality manifest Itself in illusion?"

Master: "Wherever there is illusion, there is the manifestation of Reality."

Monk: "Do you say, then, Reality can never be separated from illusion?"

Master: "Where can you possibly find the appearance of illusion?" ³

At another time, this same Ts'ao-shan Pen-chi was asked by a wandering monk,

"What is your name?"

"My name is Pen-chi," he answered.

"Say something about ultimate Reality," demanded the monk.

"I will not say anything," [replied Pen-chi].

But the monk insisted; and Pen-chi said simply,

"It is not called Pen-chi." ⁴

The difficulty of expressing the paradoxical nature of the absolute Reality, which is other than, but not other than, Its projected world-appearance is oftentimes illustrated in the utterances of the early Ch'an masters.

Tung-shan Liang-chieh (807-896) said:

I meet Him wherever I go;

He is the same as me,

Yet I am not He.

Only if you understand this,

Will you identify with the *Tathata* (the Truth, the Real).⁵

Ch'an and Zen Buddhism is replete with the recognition of this paradoxicality, and brings this recognition into the most ordinary experiences of life, and the most ordinary of conversations, relying often, not on words, but on wordless symbols to get across their point:

The Master asked Pai-chang, his disciple, “What will you teach others?”

Pai-chang raised his staff aloft.

The Master remarked, “Is that all? Nothing else?”

Pai-chang threw his staff on the ground. ⁶

Ummon (d. 996), holding up his staff before his disciples, asked, “What is this? If you say it is a staff, you go right to hell; but if it is not a staff, what is it?” And Tokusan (799-865), who was fond of giving blows with a stick to awaken his disciples, also used to ask a similar question of his disciples, and then say, “If you say ‘yes,’ thirty blows; if you say ‘no,’ thirty blows.”

It is easy to see from these examples that, while the goal of enlightenment is the same in all mystical traditions, and the Truth experienced is always the same, the expression of that Truth is infinitely variable. What distinguishes the Ch’an and Zen Buddhist traditions from their Indian counterparts is their unique methods of teaching. They trace this “non-verbal” method of the transmission of knowledge to the Buddha himself, who, according to legend, gave his message to the gathered assemblage on the Mount of the Holy Vulture by simply raising aloft a single kumbhala flower which had been given to him by the god, Brahma. Only one disciple in the throng gave evidence of understanding the import of the Buddha’s gesture: an old man named Mahakasyapa, who simply smiled in appreciation. With this, the Buddha is said to have immediately turned over the succession of Mastership to Mahakasyapa. From this legendary non-verbal transmission, the Ch’an and Zen Buddhists find a precedent for their own tradition.

The perpetuation of this special tradition is said to have been initiated in China by Bodhidharma, who came from India to China in 520 C.E. His influence is described in a 9th century work called “The Complete Explanation of The Source of Ch’an” by Kuei-feng Tsung-mi (780-841):

When Bodhidharma came to China, he saw that most Chinese students did not grasp the truth of Buddhism. They merely sought it through interpretation of textual terminology and thought of the changing phenomena all around them as real activity. Bodhidharma wished to make these eager students see that the finger pointing at the moon is not the moon itself. The Truth is nothing but one’s own mind. Thus, he maintained that the real teaching must be transmitted directly from one mind to

another, without the use of words.⁷

Bodhidharma and his followers rejected the necessity of the long-winded metaphysical formulations of the Indians as a means to enlightenment. They advocated instead a method of evoking an immediate perception of Truth, a sudden recognition of the nature of one's own mind, unfettered by mental formulations or expectations, "a special transmission outside the scriptures; no dependence upon words and letters, a direct pointing to the Soul of man; the seeing into one's own nature and thus the attainment of Buddhahood."

Whenever words are used, whether as tools of analysis, or to construct metaphors and analogies, they must invariably fall short of an adequate representation of the unitive Reality. To many enlightened men, the endless parade of word-pictures and attempted descriptions by the countless millions of seers over the ages appears a futile and self-defeating game. Such a recognition led the early Chinese and Japanese Buddhists to pursue a method of knowledge-awakening which transcended the impossible demands of language, which directly evoked the immediate Reality, and awakened the mind to its true nature. And over the centuries, this method has gradually become the special hallmark of the Ch'an and Zen Buddhist traditions.

Taking the rejection of metaphysical formulations as their starting point, they began to devise methods whereby they might turn, or startle, a disciple toward the direct perception of his own Self, his own Being. "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" questioned the Master; and the disciple, deprived of a verbalized answer, had necessarily to peer into the silence of his own being for the comprehension of Nonduality. Thus, instead of hoping to awaken a disciple to enlightenment through such explanations as Shankara and the Vedantists offer, and thereby leading him to delve into his own mind to experience the Truth, the enlightened seers of China and Japan practiced a non-analytical method of awakening the disciple; a method which causes the disciple to grab directly and immediately, by wordless insight, at the living truth of his own existence.

When Ummon is asked, "What is Zen?" he stares the disciple fiercely in the face, and exclaims, "That's it! That's it!" This method of the famous Ch'an and Zen masters is a method of shock, a startling of the mind in order to suddenly knock away the clouds of verbalized concepts in the mind of the seeker and awaken him to the immediate reality of consciousness in the here and now. But who can say whether this method is more effective than another? Who can say whether more men and women have been induced to know the Truth for themselves by

Shankara's reasonings, or by Jesus' exhortations, or by the words of the *Bhagavad Gita*, or by Ummon's "That's it!" We can only observe that, in China and Japan, the intellectual method was rejected, and the "direct pointing to the Soul of man" was embraced as a method of instruction.

Teaching methods may vary; but the Truth remains one. And no one has ever realized It without an intense and arduous searching for It within themselves. In the last analysis, it is the determination and fitness of the disciple, which determines whether he will attain to the clear vision of Truth, and *that*, after all, is in the hands of God. Perhaps the most a teacher may do is to exhort and encourage a student to apply himself with all his might to the search for Truth within himself. With this purpose in mind, the famous Zen master, Hakuin (1683-1768), sang:

Not knowing how near the Truth is,
People seek It far away— what a pity!
They are like one who, in the midst of water,
Cries imploringly for a drink of water,
Or like the son of a rich man
Who wanders away among the poor.

...Those who testify to the truth of the nature of the Self,
Have found it by reflecting within themselves,
And have gone beyond the realm of mere ideas.
For them opens the gate of the oneness of cause and effect;
And straight runs the path of Nonduality ...
Abiding with the Undivided amidst the divided,
Whether going or returning, they remain forever unmoved.

Holding fast to, and remembering *That* which is beyond thought,
In their every act, they hear the voice of the Truth.
How limitless the sky of unbounded freedom!
How pure the perfect moonlight of Wisdom!
At that moment, what do they lack?
As the eternally quiescent Truth reveals Itself to them,
This very earth is the lotus-land of Purity,
And this body is the body of the Buddha. ⁸

The experience of *samadhi*, or *satori*, is self-revealing, self-illuminating; it effortlessly reveals the unitive Truth, and dispels all doubts. There is no difficulty of understanding involved in it whatsoever. What *is* difficult, however, is the

subsequent adjustment to living the rest of one's life with the knowledge thus acquired. It takes a good deal of reflection and getting-used-to in order to recognize only the One in all phenomenal manifestations as well. Such an acquired habitual perspective no longer distinguishes between the Absolute and the relative but focuses singly on the awareness of Unity. Such a mind takes no interest in pursuing gratification in appearances but remains unswayed from Unity-awareness by either pleasant or unpleasant circumstances.

It is this adjustment, or resolution, to life on the relative plane which, therefore, claims much of the attention of the enlightened, and which constitutes much of the written material by the Self-realized sages of every mystical tradition. The writings of the early Ch'an Buddhists are particularly replete with declarations concerning this resolution, this final state of Unity-awareness. Though the language and teaching methods of the Ch'an and Zen Buddhists are unique to themselves, the goal of enlightenment and the attainment of a perfect and lasting Unity-awareness is the same for all. In many of the poems and utterances of the memorable saints of the Chinese and Japanese Buddhist tradition, we can hear something of that pure and simple state; we can hear the voice of the unfettered Self, released from all doubt and conflict.

In one of the earliest Buddhist treatises to come out of China, called *Hsin-hsin ming*, "Inscription on The Self of The Self," written by an obscure monk named Seng-ts'an (d. 606), we find an especially illuminating expression of this ultimate awareness. While it represents a movement toward the early China-izing, or simplifying, of Buddhist ideology, it is scarcely distinguishable from the Taoism which preceded it. Its author was, undoubtedly, an enlightened man, and a Buddhist; but he was also a Chinaman with a long heritage of Taoist phraseology. In this perfect gem of wisdom, we can actually see the transformation of Indian Buddhism into something distinctly Chinese, as Buddhism blends into Taoism, and the one perennial philosophy of Unity resurfaces once more; this time, under the name of Ch'an:

The perfect Tao knows no difficulties;
It only refuses to make preferences.
When freed from hate and love,
It reveals Itself fully and without disguise.

A tenth of an inch's difference,
And heaven and earth are set apart;
If you want to see It manifest,

Take no thought either for or against It.

To set up what you like against what you dislike:
This is the disease of the mind;
When the profound Truth is not understood,
Peace of mind is disturbed, and nothing is gained.

[The Truth is] perfect like the vastness of space,
With nothing wanting, nothing superfluous;
It is indeed due to making choices
That the One Reality is lost sight of.

Pursue not the outer entanglements,
Dwell not in the inner Void;
When the mind rests serene in the oneness of things,
Dualism vanishes by itself.

When oneness is not thoroughly understood,
In two ways loss may be sustained:
The denial of the world may lead to its absolute negation,
While the denying of the Void may result in the denying of your [true] Self.
Wordiness and intellection—The more with them the further astray we
go;
Away, therefore, with wordiness and intellection,
And there is no place where we cannot pass freely.

When we return to the root, we gain the meaning;
When we pursue the external objects, we lose the purpose.
The moment we are enlightened within,
We go beyond the voidness of a world confronting us.

Transformations going on in an empty world which confronts us
Appear real all because of ignorance.
Try not to seek after the Real;
Only cease to cherish opinions.

Tarry not with dualism,
Carefully avoid pursuing it;
As soon as you have right and wrong,
Confusion ensues, and the mind is lost.

The two exist because of the One,
 But hold not even to this One;
 When the one Consciousness is not disturbed,
 The ten thousand things offer no offence.

When no offence is offered by them, they are as if non-existent;
 When the mind is not disturbed, it is as if there is no mind.
 The subject is quieted as the object ceases;
 The object ceases as the subject is quieted.

The object is an object for the subject;
 The subject is a subject for an object.
 Know that the relativity of the two
 Rests ultimately on the oneness of the Void.

In the oneness of the Void, the two are one,
 And each of the two contains in itself all the ten thousand things.
 When no discrimination is made between this and that,
 How can a one-sided and prejudiced view arise?

... In the higher realm of true Being,
 There is neither “other” nor “self”;
 When a direct identification is required,
 We can only say, “not two.”

In being not two, all is the same;
 All that *is* is comprehended in it.
 The wise in all the ten quarters
 Enter into this same absolute Awareness.

This absolute Awareness is beyond movement and rest;
 One instant is ten thousand years.
 No matter how things are regarded—as being or non-being,
 It is manifest everywhere before you.

...One in all,
 All in One—
 If only this is realized,
 No more worry about not being perfect! ⁹

About one hundred years later, another Ch'an master, by the name of Yung-chia Ta-shih (d. 713), wrote his *Cheng-tao Ke*, "Song Of Enlightenment," which reiterates, in equally inspiring tones, this same knowledge, this same enlightened state of awareness:

Do you know that leisurely sage who has gone beyond learning,
and who does not exert himself in anything?
He neither endeavors to avoid idle thoughts nor seeks after the Truth;
[For he knows that] ignorance is also the Reality,
[And that] this empty, illusory, body is nothing but the absolute Reality
(*Dharmakaya*).
When one knows the Absolute, there are no longer any [independent]
objects;

The Source of all things is the absolute Self of all the enlightened.
The five elements are like a cloud floating aimlessly here and there;
And the three passions are like the foam which appears and disappears
on the surface of the ocean.

When the absolute Reality is known, it is seen to be without any
individual selves,
and devoid of any objective forms;
All past [mental and physical] actions which lead to hell are instantly
wiped away.

... After the Awakening, there is only vast Emptiness;
this vast universe of forms ceases to exist [outside of one's Self].
Here, one sees neither sin nor bliss, neither loss nor gain.
In the midst of the eternal Serenity, no questions arise;
The dust of ignorance which has accumulated on the unpolished mirror
for ages,
Is now, and forever, cleared away in the vision of Truth.

...The people do not know where to find this precious jewel
Which lies deep within the creative Power (*Tathagata-garba*);
The activity miraculously performed by the creative Power
is an illusion and yet it is not an illusion,
[Just as] the rays of light emanating from the one perfect Sun
belong to it and yet do not belong to it.

Let us be thoroughgoing, not only in inner experience,
 but in its interpretation,
 And our lives will be perfect in meditation and in wisdom as well,
 not adhering one-sidedly to Emptiness (*Sunyata*) alone.
 It is not we alone who have come to this conclusion;
 All the enlightened, numerous as the sands of India, are of the same
 mind.

I crossed seas and rivers, climbed mountains, and forded streams, In
 order to interview the Masters, to enquire after Truth, to delve into the
 secrets of Ch'an;
 But since I learned the true path from my Master [Hui-neng: 638-713],
 I know that birth-and-death is not what I need to be concerned with.
 For walking is Ch'an, sitting is Ch'an;
 Whether talking or remaining silent, whether moving or
 standing still, the Essence Itself is always at rest.
 Even when confronted by swords and spears, It never loses
 Its way of stillness;
 Not even poisonous drugs can perturb Its serenity.

Ever since the realization—which came to me suddenly—
 that I have never been born,
 All vicissitudes of fate, good and bad, have lost their power over me.
 Far off, in the mountains, I live in a modest hut;
 The mountains are high, the shade-trees are broad, and under an old
 pine tree
 I sit quietly and contentedly in my monkish home;
 Here, perfect tranquility and rustic simplicity reign.
 [The sage] neither seeks the Truth, nor avoids the defilements;
 He clearly perceives that all dualities are empty and have no reality.
 And, since they have no reality, he is not one-sided,
 neither empty, nor not-empty.

This is the genuine state of sagehood.
 The one Mind, like a mirror, reflects everything brightly,
 and knows no limitations;
 It pervades the entire universe in even its minutest crevices.
 This world and all its contents, multitudinous in form, are
 reflected in the one Mind,

Which, shining like a perfect gem, has no “outer” or “inner.”

If we hold exclusively to Emptiness, we deny the entire causal world;
All is then attributed to chance, with no ruling principle,
inviting evil to prevail.

The same error occurs when one holds exclusively to the
manifested, denying the Emptiness;
That would be like throwing oneself into the flames in order
to avoid being drowned in the water.

...The Real need not be adhered to;
As for the non-real, there has never been any such thing.
When both Real and non-Real are put aside,
“non-real” becomes meaningless.
[Even] when the various means to [the attainment of]
Emptiness are abandoned,
The eternal Oneness of the sage remains as It has always
been. ¹⁰

In the ongoing tradition of Ch’an and Zen Buddhism, many such declarations have
been uttered; oftentimes they are but brief and simple declarations of isolation and
profound contentment. And oftentimes, when we read the poems of the early
Ch’an and Zen masters, such as this, by P’ang-yun (d. 811):

How wondrously supernatural,
And how miraculous this!
I carry water, and I carry fuel. ¹¹

Or this, by Pao-tzu Wen-ch’i (10th century):

Drinking tea, eating rice,
I pass my time as it comes;
Looking down at the stream,
Looking up at the mountain,
How serene and relaxed I feel indeed! ¹²

Or this, by Hsue-tou (950-1052):

What life can compare to this?

Sitting quietly by the window,
I watch the leaves fall and the flowers bloom,
As the seasons come and go. ¹³

...we may fail to recognize the connection of these Oriental Buddhists to their parent tradition, and lose sight of the long, arduous progression of understanding which led to the apparent simplicity of the enlightened Ch'an and Zen masters. Their simple poems may seem far removed from the reasonings of the early Buddhist Fathers on the complementarity of *nirvana* and *samsara*, but they represent the ultimate synthesis of centuries of metaphysics, and the final freedom of those who have realized that synthesis in their ordinary lives. How simple seem these Buddhist sages, yet their very simplicity is the simplicity of the blessed; it stands on the heads of the Buddhas of the past and reveals a consummation of the struggles of a thousand lifetimes.

* * *

NOTES:

1. Stryck & Ikemoto, *Zen Poems, Prayers, Sermons, Anecdotes, Interviews*, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday Anchor Books, 1965.
2. Suzuki, *Essays In Zen Buddhism, Second Series*, N.Y., Samuel Weiser, 1970; pp. 23-24.
3. Chung-yuan, Chang, *Original Teachings Of Ch'an Buddhism*, N.Y., Pantheon Books, 1975; pp. 72-73.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
6. Suzuki, D.T., *Manual Of Zen Buddhism*, N.Y, Grove Press, 1960; p. 111.
7. Chung-yuan, Chang, *Original Teachings Of Ch'an Buddhism*, N.Y., Pantheon Books, 1975.
8. Suzuki, D.T., *Essays In Zen Buddhism, First Series*, N.Y., Grove Press, 1961; p. 336.
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11. Suzuki, D.T., *Essays In Zen Buddhism, First Series*, N.Y., Grove Press, 1961; p. 319.
12. Chung-yuan, Chang, *op. cit*; p. 141.
13. Suzuki, *Manual Of Zen Buddhism*, N.Y, Grove Press, 1960; p. 127.

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11. The Hermetics

(from *History of Mysticism*, 1987)

One of the authentic mystical traditions, which historians now include under the heading of “Gnostic”, is the Hermetic tradition. Up until the 17th century, when a Greek scholar named Isaac Casaubon (d. 1614 C.E.), corrected their dating, the body of writings called the *Corpus Hermetica* was considered to be of a very ancient origin. They are purportedly the writings of Hermes (the Egyptian Thoth, identified with Mercury), who is usually given the title, “Trismegistus” (thrice-great). He was said to be a great mystic and prophet, descended from Atlas and Prometheus, who lived only shortly after Moses (ca. 1200 B.C.E.). This ancient genealogy was believed to be accurate even by such Christian notables as Lactantius and, later, St. Augustine. It is now clear, however, that *the writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus were written during that mystically prolific period from the 1st to the 3rd centuries of the Current Era*. Therefore, they must be regarded as a portion, though a distinct one, of the Gnostic movement of that time; and their author must be considered to have had access to the writings of Philo, and perhaps even to the Neoplatonist writings of Plotinus.

In its Greek form, the *Corpus Hermetica* was known and widely influential during those early centuries, but fell into obscurity during later centuries, until it was translated from a Greek manuscript into Latin by Marcilio Ficino in 1463. Ficino brought the Hermetic writings into great prominence during the early Renaissance period, still believing it to be the work of a pre-Christian and pre-Socratic Egyptian sage of great antiquity. The diverse body of writings known as *Hermetica* is divided into two main books: *Asclepius* (“On The Divine Will”) and *Poimander* (“On The Power And Wisdom Of God”). They vary in content from purely mystical theology to the lore of magic and astrology. It is not within our province to examine here the astrological and magical elements of the *Corpus Hermetica*, but the mystical portions, among the most noteworthy writings of this period, deserve extensive quotation. The dialogues between God and Hermes and between Hermes and his son in *Poimander* are some of the most beautiful and authentic mystical utterances ever written.

Unlike the degenerate forms of Gnosticism, in which a Dualistic cosmology is asserted, the Hermetic writings are predominantly Nondual, and are based on genuine mystical vision. In the *Poimander*, Hermes experiences God as an infinite Light, which he describes as “That which is unpolluted, which has no limit, no color, no form, is motionless, naked, shining, which can only be apprehended by Itself, the unalterable Good, the Incorporeal.” That infinite Light is the Divine

Mind (*Nous*), which speaks to Hermes, telling him, “This Light is I, Myself, thy God ... and the luminous Word (*Logos*) issuing from Me is the Son of God.”¹ This characterization of the creative Power of God as “the Son” is also mentioned in *Asclepius*:

The Lord and Creator of all things, whom we have the right to call God, ... made the second God [the *Logos*] visible and sensible... He made him first, and alone, and one only; and he appeared to Him beautiful, and most full of good things; and He hallowed him and altogether loved him as His own Son.²

As we have seen, the designation of God’s creative Power as God’s “only begotten Son” did not originate with the early Christians but was a designation popular since Philo; and is merely another analogical attempt to differentiate the creative Impulse of God from the primal Essence, universally designated as the “Father” of all. The “Son” is that divine creative Power which, in many other traditions, is called the “Mother”; but, of course, these designations of gender are figurative only, being merely arbitrary symbols of That which is beyond all gender. They represent the mystic’s attempt to portray, with anthropomorphic symbols, the bond of relationship existing between the primal Source and Its Creative Power.

The Divine Mind, continuing to speak to Hermes, explains how It manifests the world through Its *Logos*:

The eternal [*Logos*] is the Power of God, and the work of the eternal [*Logos*] is the world, which has no beginning, but is continually becoming by the activity of the eternal [*Logos*]. Therefore, nothing that constitutes the world will ever perish or be destroyed, for the eternal [*Logos*] is imperishable. All this great body of the world is a Soul, full of intellect and of God, who fills it within and without and vivifies everything.

Contemplate through Me [the Divine Mind], the world and consider its beauty. ... See that all things are full of light. See the earth, settled in the midst of all, the great nurse who nourishes all earthly creatures. All is full of Soul, and all beings are in movement. Who has created these things? The one God, for God is one. You see that the world is always one, the Sun, one; the moon, one; the divine activity, one; God, too, is one. And since all is living, and Life is also one, God is certainly one. It is by the action of God that all things come into being...

...All that is, He contains within Himself like thoughts: the world, Himself, the All. Therefore, unless you make yourself equal to God, you cannot understand God; for like is not intelligible save to the like. Make yourself grow to a greatness beyond measure; by a leap [of intellect], free yourself from the body; raise yourself above all time, become Eternity; then you will understand God.

Believe that nothing is impossible for you; think yourself immortal and capable of understanding all, all arts, all sciences, the nature of every living being. Mount higher than the highest height; descend lower than the lowest depth. Draw into yourself all sensations of everything created, fire and water, the dry and the moist, imagining that you are everywhere, on earth, in the sea, in the sky; that you are not yet born, in the maternal womb, adolescent, old, dead, beyond death. If you embrace in your thought all things at once—all times, places, substances, qualities, quantities—you may understand God. Say no longer that God is invisible. Do not speak thus, for what is more manifest than God? He has created all only that you may see it through the beings. For that is the miraculous power of God, to show Himself through all beings. For nothing is invisible, not even the incorporeal. The intellect makes itself visible in the act of thinking; God makes Himself visible in the act of creating. ³

In yet another dialogue, this time between Hermes and his son, Tat, the identity of God, man, and the world is further elucidated:

HERMES: The intellect, O Tat, is drawn from the very substance of God. In men, this intellect is God; and so, some men are gods and their humanity is near to the Divine. When man is not guided by intellect, he falls below himself into an animal state. All men are subject to Destiny, but those in possession of the Logos, which commands the intellect from within, are not under it in the same manner as others. God's two gifts to man of intellect and the Logos have the same value as immortality. If man makes right use of these, he differs in no way from the immortals.

The world, too, is a god, image of a greater God. United to Him and performing the order and will of the Father, it is the totality of life. There is nothing in it, through all the duration of the cyclic return willed by the Father, which is not alive. The Father has willed that the world should be living so long as it keeps its cohesion; hence the

world is necessarily God. How then could it be that, in that which is God, the image of the One, there should be dead things? For death is corruption, and corruption is destruction, and it is impossible that anything of God could be destroyed.

TAT: Do not the living beings in the world die, O father, although they are parts of the world?

HERMES: Hush, my child, for you are led into error by the appearance of the phenomenon. Living beings do not die, but, being composite bodies, they are dissolved; this is not death but the dissolution of a mixture. If they are dissolved, it is not to be destroyed but to be renewed... Contemplate then the beautiful arrangement of the world and see that it is alive, and that all matter is full of life.

TAT: Is God then in matter, O father?

HERMES: Where could matter be placed if it existed apart from God [who is infinite]? Would it not be but a confused mass, unless it were ordered? And if it is ordered, by whom is it ordered? The energies which operate in it are parts of God. Whether you speak of matter or bodies or substance, know that all these are the energy of God, of the God who is all. In the All there is nothing which is not God. Adore this teaching, my child, and hold it sacred. ⁴

This teaching is, indeed, the perennial teaching of all mystics; we find it in the Upanishads, in the words of the Buddha, Jesus, and all others who have seen the unitive Truth of all existence. And while these teachings, attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, are not as ancient as once believed, they are nonetheless remarkable for their brilliant clarity, depth of knowledge, and uncompromising wisdom. Many times, throughout the course of history, they have been rediscovered, reexamined, and re-appreciated; and, even today, they wield great fascination for students of mystical theology. However, we still know very little about the real Hermes—if he existed at all, and nothing of the 2nd or 3rd century author who wrote such magnificent examples of the perennial philosophy under his name. We cannot even be certain of whether he was an Egyptian, Greek, or Jew. But we are grateful for his testimonies and count him among the greatest and wisest of the seers of God, whose teachings have served to illumine countless generations along the way.

NOTES:

1. *Corpus Hermeticum, Poimander*: 1.11; based on Yates, Frances A., *Giordano Bruno And The Hermetic Tradition*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1964; p. 23.
2. Ibid., *Corpus Hermeticum, Asclepius*: II; pp. 42-43.
3. Ibid., *Corpus Hermeticum, Poimander*: 1.11; pp. 31-32.
4. Ibid., *Corpus Hermeticum, Poimander*: 1.12; pp. 33-34.

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12. Kapila (from *History of Mysticism*, 1987)

The seers who authored the Upanishads had known in themselves the great Unity and had declared for all to come thereafter that the soul of man and the Lord of all creation were one and the same; *Tat twam asi!* was their repeated cry: “That Thou Art!” And more, “All this universe is That!”

“But how,” the uncomprehending mind questions, “can this be so? How can the Unmoving be identical with the incessantly fluctuating universe? How can this world of transient phenomena, where all things and beings are born, suffer and die, be identical to the God who is said to be formless, unchanging, and eternally One? And how is it possible to reconcile that eternal Self with what we experience as our separate transient selves existing in the world? Are there two selves, or is our personal self merely an illusion that we are experiencing in this world of birth, suffering, and death?”

“It cannot be understood through reasoning or subtlety of intellect,” reply the sages of the Upanishads; “only those who see It in the depths of contemplation know the secret.” And yet, still, the uncomfirmed mind strives to grasp it with the intellect, and those sages who have seen It continue in their steadfast endeavor to describe It, in order to provide to those who have not seen It some idea of just what It is like.

One such sage, named Kapila, who lived around the 8th or 9th century B.C.E. in the northeastern part of India, after realizing in himself the Truth of existence, made a valiant and brilliant attempt to explain the mysterious Unity-in-duality to the satisfaction of those who had not known It. Like all attempts before or since, it failed to accomplish its purpose, and mainly served only to foster more misconceptions and misinterpretations. Still, it is a perfectly true and simple

description from the vantage point of one who has seen the Truth, and for that reason, Kapila's beautifully formulated description of Reality has lived on for centuries and centuries, providing the foundation and framework for description by the many seers of the Truth who came after him.

Kapila's explanation of Reality came to be known as the philosophy of *Samkhya*, a word which, like *Veda*, means "knowledge" or "wisdom." To designate the all-pervading eternal Consciousness, Kapila used the word, *Purusha*; it is a word, which had appeared previously in the Vedas to mean "the universal Self," or "Person." And to designate the creative Energy, which emanates from *Purusha* and manifests as the phenomenal world, he used the word, *Prakrti*. *Prakrti* is identical with Shiva's *Shakti*, Brahman's *Maya*, or *Prthivi*, the earth Mother of the Vedas. It is *Prakrti* which appears as atoms, molecules, and all the sentient and insentient world.

These two, *Purusha* and *Prakrti*, are what we today might call "spirit" and "matter," except that *Prakrti* is more than what we regard as matter; it is the substance of all forms, including thought-forms, dream-images, and the individual psyche. It is everything that is experienced as "the world"—on both the subtle and gross levels, from both the subjective and the objective perspectives. *Purusha*, on the other hand, is the Eternal, the unmanifested Essence, the unstained and unchanging Consciousness. It is the light of conscious Awareness, which not only illumines but also allows us to perceive the world of *Prakrti*. *Purusha* is the one cosmic Consciousness; *Prakrti* is the Energy-production of that Consciousness. Our own individual consciousness mirrors *Purusha*; and our power of thought-production mirrors *Prakrti*.

Those who have known the experience of Unity realize these two to be complementary aspects of one indivisible Reality; but, as both of these aspects of the One possess mutually exclusive qualities, it is necessary—in order to differentiate them by quality—to give them separate and distinct names. This division of names and qualities gives the impression of an ultimate duality; but that is an impression due merely to the nature of language. These two must, in language at least, remain apparently distinct simply in order to explain their unity. And that unity is realized only in the transcendent "vision" of the mystic, who knows them to be, beyond all doubt, inseparably One.

Kapila's categorization and analysis of the two aspects of Existence, *Purusha* and *Prakrti*, had a vast influence on later thinkers, yet many who had not experienced that Unity for themselves corrupted his vision into a Dualistic philosophical system wherein the two came to be regarded, not as complementary aspects of the One,

but as two eternally separate and irreconcilable Principles at odds with one another. It was just such a dualistic view, which was also espoused by the followers of Zoroaster in Persia, and later by the Manichaeans Gnostics. It seems there has never been a scarcity of unenlightened men and women at the ready in this world to corrupt the words of the enlightened to fit their own pitifully childish views. Today we see the same delusion upheld by those who see existence as an eternal struggle between Jehovah and Satan.

While these two terms, *Purusha* and *Prakrti*, may appear foreign to the Western mind, we must recognize that Kapila's conception of Reality is the essence of all mystical philosophy, past and present. We find it echoed, at least implicitly, in the conceptions of Reality formulated by all the mystics and teachers of spiritual life. This, for example, from the Bible, expresses a distinction between "the Father" and "the world":

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father, but of the world.¹

Similarly, in the earlier Upanishads, these two aspects of the One, corresponding to *Purusha* and *Prakrti*, were not referred to by name, but were merely inferred:

The Immortal is veiled by the world. The Spirit of Life is the Immortal. Name and form are the world, and by them the Spirit is veiled.²

Behold the glory of God in the universe and in all that lives and moves on earth. Leaving the transient, find joy in the Eternal.³

But in the later Upanishads, written after the time of Kapila, such as the *Svetasvatara*, the Samkhya terminology is used:

Prakrti is changing and passing; but *Purusha* is eternal. ...By meditation on Him, by contemplation of Him, and by communion with Him, there comes in the end destruction of earthly delusion.⁴

In the same Upanishad, the author refers to the names used by the older Vedic tradition for these two to show that they are synonymous terms:

With Maya, His mysterious power, He made all things, and by Maya the human soul is bound. Know therefore that *Prakrti* is Maya, and

Purusha is Rudra (Shiva), the ruler of Maya. All beings in our universe are contained in His infinite splendor.⁵

...He is the Eternal among things that pass away, pure Consciousness of conscious beings, the One who fulfills the prayers of many. By the wisdom of Samkhya and the practice of yoga (contemplation), a man knows the Eternal; and when a man knows the Eternal, he is free from all fetters.⁶

The great contribution which Kapila made to philosophical thought was to define and examine in unprecedented detail the nature and qualities of each of the two aspects of Reality, so that the mind could easily distinguish between them. *Prakrti*, he tells us, is the undifferentiated field of Energy, which transmutes itself into the elements that make up the entire world of forms. The primary process of this transmutation is described by Kapila as a self-division into three separate modes of Energy, which he calls *gunas* (strands). These correspond to what scientists today would call “positive,” “negative,” and “neutral” energy-charges. Kapila calls them *rajas*, *tamas*, and *sattva*. They are the three “strands” which, woven together, constitute the fabric of *Prakrti*; and which, by their incessant interaction, form the manifold universe, including all sentient and insentient beings.

We experience these three modes of energy in the following ways: *rajas* as passion, restlessness and assertive activity; *tamas* as dullness, lassitude and inertia; and *sattva* as clarity, refinement of intellect, and tranquility. *Sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* are constantly alternating, which accounts for the changes we experience in mood and functional ability. Thus, *Prakrti*, composed of the three *gunas*, is both the cause and the substance of the entire vast range of experiential phenomena, which we call “the world.” Yet, while this transient and ephemeral drama of thought, form, and movement goes on, there is a steady, unchanging and eternal Consciousness, which remains ever aloof as the Witness of the drama; that is *Purusha*. *Purusha* is the universal Self, the light of Consciousness, which illumines *Prakrti* and which, standing distinguishably separate from *Prakrti*, exists as the unchanging witness-consciousness in every individual being.

Today, we would consider Kapila’s metaphysics to be anachronistic. Our current (scientific) view sees the world in quite different terms. The world is regarded nowadays as a manifestation of a fourteen billion-year-old burst of Energy that gradually solidified over time into a material universe. But this world of energy perceptible as matter is still held to be contradistinguished from the one Divine Consciousness which is its Source, and which constitutes our true and eternal Self. In that respect, our current metaphysics is not so different from the view of Kapila.

All suffering, according to Kapila, is simply the result of forgetfulness of one's true Self, or *Purusha*, while identifying with the ever-changing world of *Prakrti*, and thereby being caught up in the play of light and shadow, believing that to be one's self. And the means of deliverance from suffering is, first of all, to distinguish between the two, and to cease to identify with *Prakrti*. Since *Prakrti* is a mere display, intrinsically transient, it is, in the final analysis, unreal. The real is *Purusha*, the eternal, unchanging Self. Kapila condenses this philosophy into four principal "truths":

1. That from which we want to be delivered is pain.
2. Deliverance (liberation) is the cessation of pain.
3. The cause of pain is the lack of discrimination between *Prakrti* and *Purusha*.
4. The means of deliverance is discrimination [between these two]. ⁷

In other words, according to Kapila, all suffering in this life is the result of wrong identification: identifying with *Prakrti* instead of *Purusha*. Suffering is inherent in *Prakrti* but does not exist in *Purusha*. *Purusha* is our eternal, and therefore real, Self. When we discriminate between them, we realize that all suffering belongs only to *Prakrti*, and cannot touch our true Self. It is this vision of Kapila's which, as we shall see, provided the framework for that great spiritual masterpiece, the *Bhagavad Gita*.

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13. Tantra (from *History of Mysticism*, 1987)

The word, “Tantra,” seems to have been derived from the Sanskrit root, *tan*, meaning “to expand.” It appears as early as the 4th century B.C.E., in a work called the *Apastamba-Srauta Sutra*, where it is used to signify any ritual procedure containing a number of aspects. Kautilya, in the 3rd century B.C.E., used the word in the sense of ‘fundamental canons of a system of thought.’ But by the early centuries of the Current Era, the word, *Tantra*, had come to be associated with a distinct metaphysical view complete with its own unique terminology. It is a metaphysic based on mystical experience, and is essentially identical to the viewpoint of Vedanta, Samkhya and Yoga. It is, indeed, yet another expression of the age-old and perennial vision of a primal and essential Unity self-divided into Male and Female principles.

Since the earliest utterings of man, the primal Unity, experienced by the mystic, has been characterized as dual-faceted; one aspect being transcendent, the other immanent as the world; one absolute, the other relative; one eternally unchanged, the other a panoply of movement. And since earliest times these two aspects have been designated Male and Female: The Absolute, the supreme Consciousness, is the Father, the male sovereign and Lord; His creative Energy, which gives birth to the universe, is the Mother-power, the bountiful Goddess, queen Maya. Put in less figurative terms, the constant Awareness, which is realized in the experience of Unity to be the one eternal and indivisible Reality, is also realized to be the very One who projects His own living light in the form of the universe. That light is not separate from Himself, nor does it, in fact, go out from Him; but in order to speak of it at all, it is necessary to differentiate it from the constant Awareness, the unchanging Absolute. Thus, the primal Awareness is spoken of as “He”; and the light that forms the mutable world is called “She.” But they are never two. He is the universal Mind; She is His Thought. He is the Speaker; She is the Word. He is the Seed; She is the Tree. They are complementary aspects of one indivisible Reality.

It is not very difficult to see how these two purely abstract principles came to be represented by artists and poets since primitive times as two independent objects of worship, humanized according to the characteristics described by the sages. “He” was the remote, unapproachable, Absolute, and was therefore portrayed by the Dravidian peoples of ancient India as a totally indrawn ascetic, a naked yogi, seated in perpetual contemplation of eternity atop the icy peaks of Mount Kailas. He sat on the ground with his long, untended hair piled on his head, a cobra draped

‘round his neck, and his face and body covered with the ashes of the world, which, in his own mind, he had reduced to nothing. In his hands he held a trident and a conch; his mount was the great white bull, Nandi; and his symbol was the phallus-shaped stone, called the *lingam*. Such an hyposticized representation of the absolute Being has existed in India since the most ancient of times, long before the Aryan invasion; and over the centuries, “He” has been called by many different names. In Vedic times, he was referred to as *Pashupati* (“Lord of *pashus*, or sentient creatures); when associated with the angry and destructive forces of nature, he was *Rudra*. One of Rudra’s epithets was *Shiva*, meaning “auspicious” (even today, in India, a great rainstorm is considered “auspicious”); and eventually, *Shiva* came to be the name for God most prominently used among the Dravidian peoples. Frequently, Shiva, himself, is referred to by such epithets as *Mahadev*, “the great God,” or *Maheshvar*, “great Lord.”

Simultaneous with the early development of this God-symbol among the rural populace consisting mostly of the aboriginal races of India, was the similarly symbolic representation of the one God among the Aryan population as *Vishnu*. Vishnu, one of the names for God appearing in the Vedas, was pictured as a golden-robed sovereign who lived in splendor in the heavenly realm of Vaikuntha. It was he who became incarnated as Krishna, the cow-herd boy who later became the great king and sage of Dwarka in the *Bhagavad Gita*, and also as Rama, the brave warrior-king of the epic, *Ramayana*. Shiva and Vishnu, though obviously dissimilar in characteristics, are both symbols of the one Godhead. Shiva represents the qualities of eternity, detachment, immovability; while Vishnu stands as a symbol of the power, glory and sovereignty of the one all-governing Lord. From both the predominantly Dravidian Shaivites and the predominantly Aryan Vaishnavites, a vast body of mythology arose around both these symbols as their ritual worship spread throughout the land of India, and as many temples and statues (*murtis*) were built commemorating one or the other of these two representations of God. But, of course, the poets and artists had not forgotten the Female aspect of Reality.

The *shakti*, or manifestory-power of God, was symbolized as the female counterpart to the male deity. The consort of Shiva, his *shakti*, was *Sati* (feminine form of *Sat*, or “Truth”), the beautiful nymph-like daughter of king Daksha, whose seductive charms moved Shiva to awake from his profound contemplative state. In yet another mythological representation, She was called *Parvati*. As the hypostacized and deified Power of Shiva, She was also called *Durga*, *Kali*, or *Ambika*. She too was represented by statues and worshipped in temples devoted to her alone. She was usually depicted as many-armed, displaying both her

beneficent and her destructive aspects, holding out one hand in a gesture of gentleness and compassion, while in another she wielded a sword. She was garlanded with skulls, and daubed with blood, as she rode forth astride a ferocious lion or tiger.

For those who preferred the Vishnu-personification of God, the Female principle was the goddess, *Lakshmi*, also known as *Shri*. She was the source of all wealth and good fortune. She was the jewel-bedecked Mother who granted to her children whatever boons they asked of her. It was she who took the form of Radha, the paramour of Krishna; and Sita, the faithful wife of Rama. While Shiva's female counterpart was associated more prevalently with the angry, destructive, aspects of nature, and was pictured as a bloodthirsty she-demon, Vishnu's consort was the compassionate and gracious bestower of gifts and was pictured as the epitome of feminine beauty and grace.

Between the 1st and 5th centuries of the Current Era a vast body of mythological literature was written about these two pairs of gods. Hundreds of stories were written to describe their lives and exploits, and, mingled with these stories were the philosophical explanations of the abstract principles, which they represented. These philosophical mythologies were all the rage, as they reached to the non-intellectual populace in a way that purely didactic treatises could not. They were called by the generic name of *Puranas*; there was the *Vishnu Purana*, the *Shiva Purana*, the *Shakti Purana*, the *Bhagavat Purana* (which told the legends of Krishna), a *Skanda Purana*, and many, many others.

By this time and probably long before, there were large magnificent temples dedicated to Shiva all over the country. Some of the grandest were the Badrikashrama and Somnath temples in the north, Vishvanath temple at Benares, Nakulishvar temple at Calcutta and Rameshvaram temple in the south. Great yogis of the time, such as the illustrious Gorakshanath and Manikka-vachakar, sang the praises of Shiva, and imitated Him in their outer appearance and appurtenances. Temples and *murtis* dedicated to Vishnu in the form of Rama and Krishna also dotted the country in every town and city. The spread of the Puranic legends aroused devotion to one or another of these "gods" in the hearts of the simple populace, and every facet of their lives became permeated with devotion to these legendary beings, who represented, of course, the one Divinity.

Shakti, too, had her own temples, and her own worshippers. According to Farquhar, the medieval historian, the period ranging from 500 to 900 C.E. was called "the Shakta period," a time in which Shakti worship became widely prevalent throughout India. But even as early as the 2nd century it is apparent that

She was the object of a widespread cult. In the *Mahabharata* (2nd-3rd century C.E.), She is described as Durga, and prayers are offered to Her. And in the *Markandeya Purana*, compiled during the Gupta period (ca. 4th century), Mahadevi, the great Goddess, is treated quite extensively in one complete book of thirteen chapters, called the *Devi Mahatmyam* ("Praise of the Goddess"). There She is described as identical with Purusha's Prakrti, Vishnu's Maya, and Shiva's Shakti. She is also referred to as *Chiti*; i.e., pure Consciousness, a manifested aspect of the Absolute. The *Devi Bhagavata Purana* is entirely devoted to Her; there She is referred to as *Mahashakti*, *Mahalakshmi*, *Mahakali*, and *Mahamaya*.

The great Goddess also appears in the *Agni Purana*, *Bhagavat Purana*, *Vishnu Purana*, and others of this genre. In the 8th and 9th centuries, lesser Puranas were written in sole dedication to the Goddess; these were the so-called *Upa-Puranas*: the *Devi Purana*, *Kalika Purana*, and *Mahabhagavata Purana*. Here, as a representative sample, is how She is described in the *Vishnu Purana*:

Shri [epithet of Lakshmi], the bride of Vishnu, the mother of the world, is eternal, imperishable. As He is all pervading, so also is She.... Vishnu is the meaning, She is speech (*Vac*). Vishnu is consciousness; She is intellect. He is Goodness; She is devotion. He is the Creator; She is the creation. Shri is the earth; Hari (Vishnu) is the substratum. The God is utter stillness; She is surrender.

...Lakshmi is the light; and Hari, who is the All and the Lord of all, is the lamp. She, the mother of the world, is the creeping vine; and Vishnu, the tree around which She clings. ... He, the bestower of blessings, is the bridegroom; the lotus-throned Goddess is the bride. ...Govinda (Vishnu) is love; and Lakshmi, his gentle spouse, is [the] pleasure [of love]. But why go on listing the ways in which they are present? It is enough to say, in a word, that of gods, animals and men, Hari is all that is called male; Lakshmi is all that is termed female. There is nothing other than these two. ¹

It was by such figurative language that the mystic's profound vision of a unitive duality was conveyed to the populace. In art, the one self-divided Reality was sometimes portrayed as a god and goddess locked in a passionate embrace. In some medieval sculptures, Shiva is portrayed as a corpse (dead to the world), with Shakti, in the dreadful form of Kali, sitting on him in an act of sexual union, or dancing in abandon on his outstretched body. What the Chinese symbolized in the Yin-Yang circle, which is both divided and undivided, the Indians preferred to represent as male and female joined in a loving union. Some of the most beautiful

and erotic representations of this union were sculpted by the Buddhists in the 9th century and are in evidence to this day in the caves of Orissa and at Khajuraho. Many Tibetan figurines of the same period, which are called *Yab-Yum* (Father-Mother), also represent in erotic copulative poses these two principles of the one Reality. The inseparability of these two is expressed in the statues of Shiva as *Ardhanarishvara*, a being who is half male, half female. The predominant pictographic symbol of this duality-in-unity, however, has been since pre-Aryan times, the *lingam* in the *yonis*, a symbol found in almost every Indian temple, comprised of a stone phallus symbol accompanied by a base in the form of the female sex organ. The two together form a recognizable symbol of the complementarity of the two inseparable aspects of the One.

We are now ready, after this long preamble, to understand the expansive development of Tantra during this same period. Tantra is the yoga of the union of Shiva and Shakti. Of course, they are already one, but in order to *experience* this unity, certain practices are prescribed whereby the illusory and separative ego is dispelled and the awareness of the eternal unity dawns within. Where the Upanishadic philosophy leaves off, spiritual practice, or *sadhana*, begins; and it is this *sadhana*, which is the province of the Tantric scriptures.

From the earliest times, the Tantric *sadhana* has coexisted with the Vedantic philosophy in the mainstream of Indian spiritual teaching. But only around the 5th or 6th centuries did it become disseminated in literary form; thereafter, the principles of Tantra are to be found in nearly every subsequent piece of spiritual literature, and in the teachings of India's saints and sages. If the Vedanta represents the exoteric teaching, the Tantra represents the esoteric teaching; it is the guide to the culmination of the spiritual journey begun with the comprehension of nondualistic philosophy.

Some of the earliest of the literary expressions of Tantra were the *Apabhramsa dohas* and the *Charyagitis* of the Siddhas, and the Yogic texts of the Nathas, such as that of Gorakshanath. In Kashmir, a number of Tantric writings appeared in the 7th and 8th centuries, which are called *Agamas*, regarded by their proponents as divinely inspired scriptures. As they extol the Absolute by the name of Shiva, they are also known as *Shaivagamas*. They contain the precepts of what is now known as Kashmir Shaivism. Among these scriptural writings are the *Shiva-sutras* of Vasugupta, the *Shiva-drshiti* of Somananda, the *Tantraloka* of Abhinavagupta, and the *Pratyabijna-hridayam* of Kshemaraj. Immensely popular, these Tantric texts were immediately copied both in Sanskrit and in the regional Dravidian languages such as Telugu, Tamil, and Kanarese.

By the 8th century, Tantrism was widely taught by Brahmin and Buddhist teachers alike. In 747 C.E., Padma Shambhava, a professor at the Buddhist university of Nalanda, took the Tantric philosophy to Tibet where he founded his monastery; and around the same time a Mahayana Buddhist in Bengal was publishing his *Hevajira Tantra*. Shankaracharya, the great exponent of *advaita* (Nondualistic) Vedanta, is also said to have written at least two Tantric works, the *Sundaryalahari*, and the *Prapanchasara*. In the 10th century, while a Shaivite yogi was writing his Tantric works, the *Kalika Purana* and the *Rudrayamala*, a Jain monk of Aysore was writing his *Jvalini Tantra*. Today, the treatises on Tantra by the representatives of various religious sects are too numerous to mention.

While Tantra is primarily a *sadhana*, that is to say, a prescribed system of practice, nonetheless, in order to understand the reasoning behind the *sadhana*, it is necessary to understand not only Tantra's metaphysics, but its conception of the psychophysical nature of the human body as well. It is the teaching of Tantric yoga that the Shakti, which is the universal creative force manifesting as all sentient and insentient beings, is the projected "Power" or "Will" of Shiva, the pure Absolute:

He knows the true Reality who sees the entire universe as the play of the supreme Shakti of supreme Shiva ²

...Throughout all these forms, it is the Lord alone; He illumines His own nature. In truth, there is no other cause of all manifestation except His Will (Shakti), which gives existence to all worldly enjoyment and liberation as well. ³

...In truth, there is no difference between Uma (Shakti) and Shankara (Shiva); the One consists of two aspects; of this there is no doubt. ⁴

Such statements reveal that the Tantric metaphysic is identical to the Vedantic view and to that of all its mystically inspired predecessors. What is unique in Tantrism, and what constitutes its most significant contribution to mystical thought is its conception of man's subtle psychophysical nature. Like all mystical philosophies, Tantra recognizes that man's essential being is identical with the ultimate Being; i.e., Shiva. But, according to the Tantric scriptures, man remains ignorant of his Godhood and identified with the body and mind, so long as the Shakti residing in him remains unawakened and unevolved.

According to the Tantric scriptures, Shakti exists in man in an involuted state, whose purpose it is to evolve toward the realization of its identity with Shiva. This Shakti resides in man in a concentrated state in the subtle body, at a location

corresponding to the perineum (shown in diagrams as being at the base of the spine). To differentiate this involuted Shakti-within-man from the all-inclusive Shakti, it is called *Kundalini-Shakti* (“the coiled energy”). This *Kundalini* energy can be compared to a watch-spring which is involuted to a state of potential release, and which, according to its own timing, acts as the evolutionary force which eventually brings all mankind to a complete expansion of consciousness. When, however, it is activated (awakened), by any of several methods, it becomes quickened, rapidly increasing its activity, and leads a person to enlightenment within one lifetime.

The Tantric seers say that the subtle body is composed of a complex network of subtle nerve-filaments (*nadis*) through which the life force, called *Prana-Shakti*, flows. This *Prana-Shakti* (called *Chi* by the Taoists of ancient China) is the current, as it were, which operates to enliven the body and mind and to regulate the functions of the internal organs. When the involuted *Kundalini Shakti* is aroused, it infuses the *Prana* current with a newly intensified potency, by which the evolutionary process is greatly accelerated.

The *Prana-Shakti* normally flows evenly through two main *nadis*, which parallel either side of the spinal column; these are called *Ida* (on one’s left) and *Pingala* (on one’s right). But when the *Kundalini-Shakti* is activated, this current finds its way through a subtle middle passage, called the *Sushumna*. Within this central *nadi*, through which the activated *Prana* current flows, there are six ascending nerve-plexuses, called *chakras* (“wheels”). It is the purpose of the awakened *Kundalini* energy to cleanse and purify the *nadis*, which in unregenerate man, are clogged and constricted by immoderate living, and to pass through each of the *chakras* as it ascends from the base of the spinal column to the crown of the head. Its final goal is the seventh nerve-plexus at the top of the head, called *Sahasrar* (the thousand-petalled lotus), where *Kundalini-Shakti* is said to attain its union with Shiva. When this occurs, a person experiences the Absolute, the Godhead:

As long as the *prana* does not flow in the *Sushumna* and enter the *Sahasrar*, ...as long as the mind does not become absorbed in the Self, so long those who talk of spiritual knowledge indulge only in boastful and false prattle. ⁵

...The rush of bliss that ensues upon the meeting of the Pair, the supreme Shakti and the Self above, is the real joining; all other joinings are mere copulation. ⁶

The *Kundalini-Shakti* is ordinarily in a dormant, regulated-function state; only when it becomes awakened, or activated, does it begin its accelerated work. This

awakening is said to be achieved by several different methods: the *Kundalini* may be forcefully awakened through the regimen of postures (*asanas*) and breathing techniques (*pranayama*) prescribed by *Hatha-Yoga*; through intense devotion to God; through concentration of the mind upon the inner Self; through the practice of chanting or reciting the *mantram* given by a qualified Master (*Sadguru*); or simply by coming in contact with and receiving the graces of one who has already accomplished the full ascendancy of the *Kundalini-Shakti*. Such a person, who is in the state of enlightenment and capable of transmitting *Kundalini-Shakti* from his own accumulated fund, is called the *Guru*; and the transmission of his grace in the form of Shakti is called *Shaktipat*. According to the Tantric *shastras*, or scriptures, such a Guru is able to thus awaken the dormant *Kundalini* of those he deems prepared for it, by a mere glance, a word, a touch, or simply by his very thought or will. Such an “initiation” by the *Guru* is regarded as synonymous with receiving the grace of God:

The learned men of all times always hold that the descent of grace does not have any cause or condition but depends entirely on the free will of the Lord. ⁷

...From his transcendent station, the Lord in the form of the Guru frees one from all bondage. ⁸

...The Guru is the means [to enlightenment]. ⁹

... Initiation [by the Guru] is the first ladder to the terrace of Liberation.

¹⁰...The touch of the hand of the Guru destroys the impurities of the world and converts the base metal [of the disciple] into gold. ¹¹

When the *Kundalini-Shakti* is thus awakened, certain initial symptoms occur. They are evidenced physically, mentally, and emotionally. Physical symptoms include internal body heat, involuntary shaking of the spine and limbs (*kriyas*), and the spontaneous occurrence of *asanas* and vocal productions. Physical pain may be experienced at the base of the spine, or one may experience alternating heaviness and lightness of the body, or a stimulation of the sexual glands, or merely a great increase in vitality. One may also have the sensation of a darting, or crawling, energy rising up the spine, or experience the movement of the activated *Prana-Shakti* moving about in various parts of the body.

It is said that when a person’s Shakti is operating in the lower three *chakras* — *Muladhar*, *Svadhithana*, and *Manipura* (corresponding to the coccyx, the sex organ and the navel) — sleep, sex, and food are their main concerns. But when the *Kundalini-Shakti* reaches the heart-center, the *Anahat chakra*, one begins to feel

intense devotion and longing for God. As the *Kundalini-Shakti* rises higher to the throat region, the *Vishuddha chakra*, then one begins to hear different inner sounds and taste inner nectars; and at the forehead, the *Ajna chakra*, one sees delightful lights and visions. When the Shakti reaches the crown of the head, the *Sahasrar*, the individual consciousness merges into super-consciousness, and the aspirant reaches *samadhi*, the pure awareness of the transcendent Self:

From the element earth in the Muladhara,
 To the element fire in the Svadhisthana,
 To the element water in the Manipura,
 To the element air in the Anahata,
 To the element ether in the Vishuddha,
 To the element of mind in the Ajna,
 You travel, O Mother, to keep your secret rendezvous
 With your Lord in the thousand-petalled lotus, Sahasrar. ¹²

...When the bliss of Consciousness is attained, there is the lasting acquisition of that state in which Consciousness is one's only Self, and in which all that appears is identical with Consciousness. Even the body is experienced as identical with Consciousness. ¹³

...Awareness of the perceiver and the perceived is common to all beings. But with Self-realized yogis it is different; they are aware of them as one. ¹⁴

Thus, the whole purpose of the Tantra scriptures is to elucidate the means whereby one may experience the union of Shakti and Shiva, and thus know the transcendent Unity in *samadhi*. This Tantric *sadhana* takes many forms, from the ritualized worship of Shiva and Shakti (with flowers and fruit offerings, etc.) to austere yogic practices, to the actual sexual union of male and female practitioners in the symbolic enactment of the transcendent union of the God and Goddess. This last, however, is a degenerate form of Tantra, known by the name of *Vamachara*, or "left-hand path," to distinguish it from the "right" (*Dakshina*) or pure Tantric path. It was just this degenerate form of Tantra which led Kumarila, in the 6th century C.E., to write that Tantra was "only for the degraded, the uneducated, the fallen, and the infirm, and is fraught with much danger." The "pure" form of Tantric *sadhana* aims at transforming the individual through a harnessing of his inherent energy (*shakti*), and by a concentrated confinement of that energy within, forcing it

to rise Godward. It is the focusing of this psychic energy, which is the entire purpose of Tantric *sadhana*; and the goal of this *sadhana* is Self-realization.

In the Tantric, as well as the Vedantic, view, Self-realization is synonymous with Liberation. “Liberation,” said the Shaivite sage, Abhinavagupta, “is nothing else but the awareness of one’s own true nature.” He was stating in effect what Jesus of Nazareth had said many centuries previous: “You shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall set you free.” Always we are Consciousness. That is our continually undeviating Reality. We are the Witness of the play of our own Shakti, which is forming this entire universe. It is the *knowing* of this, the direct realization of the Self, which constitutes the soul’s liberation. For the Self, of course, there is no liberation; the Self is always free. It has never been bound. It is only our “illusory” self, our limited soul-identity that experiences bondage and liberation:

Though in reality there is no bondage, the individual is in bondage as long as there exists the feeling of limitation in him. ...In fact, there never has been any veiling or covering anywhere in reality. No one has ever been in bondage. Please show me where such bondage exists. Besides these two false beliefs, that there is such a thing as bondage and such a thing as an individual mind, there is no bondage for anyone anywhere. ¹⁵

...The individual soul (*jiva*) is Shiva; Shiva is *jiva*. When in bondage, it is *jiva*; freed from bondage, it is Shiva. ¹⁶

...The knowledge of the identity between the *jiva* and Shiva constitutes liberation; lack of this knowledge constitutes bondage. ¹⁷

The eternal Self is always free; yet so long as we are unaware of that freedom, we are bound. Liberation is therefore a state of awareness. So long as we are aware of the ever-free Self, we are entirely unconditioned by external circumstances or states of the mind. For, one who has realized that Self possesses a certainty, a permanent underlying confidence, that can never be erased, and which allows him to retain an inner peace and joyfulness regardless of circumstances of destiny or the transient fluctuations of the mind:

The yogi who knows that the entire splendor of the universe is his, who rises to the consciousness of unity with the universe, retains his Divinity even in the midst of various thoughts and fancies. ¹⁸ ...This entire universe is a sport of Consciousness.

One who is constantly aware of this is certainly a liberated being (*jivanmukta*). ¹⁹ ...The individual who has the cognition of identity,

who regards the universe to be a sport and is always united with it, is undoubtedly liberated in life. ²⁰

Such “liberation” is the ultimate goal of all knowledge-seeking. It is the inner freedom which all men seek, a freedom from doubt, from the barbs of worldly misfortune, from the deadly sting of sorrow to which all those ignorant of their true nature must be subject. For one who has attained this liberating knowledge of his eternal Self, neither bodily affliction, nor worldly circumstance, nor even death, has the power to afflict him with fear; he is fearless, (*abhaya*), for he is grounded and established in the unshakeable certainty of his permanent immortality and incorruptible bliss.

* * *

NOTES:

1. Vishnu Purana, I.8
2. Spanda karika
3. Paramartha-sara
4. Linga Purana
5. Hatha Yoga Pradipika
6. Kularnava Tantra, 5.111-112
7. Malini Vijaya Vartika
8. Kularnava Tantra, 12.25
9. Vasugupta, *Shiva Sutras*, 2.6
10. Paramananda Tantra
11. Jnanarnava Tantra, 24.41
12. Shankara, Sundaryalahari
13. Kshemaraj, Pratyabijnahridayam
14. Vijnanabhairava
15. Tripurarahasya
16. Kularnava Tantra, 9.42
17. Ishvarapratyabijna Vimarshini
18. Ishvarapratyabijna, 11-12
19. Spandakarika, 3:3
20. Kshemaraj, Pratyabijnahridayam

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14. Dadu (from *History of Mysticism*, 1987; rev. 5-18-2016)

In India, during the 16th century, there lived many great illumined saints. We have already mentioned Kabir and Nanak; there was also Chaitanya (1485-1533), the love-intoxicated *bhakta* of Bengal; Vallabha (1479-1531), the great mystic-philosopher and *acharya*; and Eknath (1548-1609), the gentle Maharashtran mystic and poet. But there was one who is especially worthy of inclusion in our story for the simple clarity of his vision and the universality of his message: his name was Dadu. Like Kabir and Nanak, he stood quite alone between the quarrelling factions of Hinduism and Islam and proclaimed the unity of all men in God and the universality of the message of all who have known Him. "Ask of those who have attained God," he said; "all speak the same word. All the saints are of one mind; it is only those in the midst of the way who follow diverse paths. All the enlightened have left one message; ...It is only those in the midst of their journey who hold diverse opinions." ¹

Dadu (1544-1603), whose name is an affectionate diminutive of the common Muslim name, Allahdad, was born at Ahmedabad, on the banks of the Saraswati river, to a Muslim merchant named Lodi Ram and his wife, Basri. From his early youth, he was gifted with a curious intellect and a love of learning. It is said that, at the age of eleven, he received the blessing of a wandering holy man, and from that time began to take interest in the knowledge of God.

At the age of eighteen, he left his home to live the religious life of prayer and meditation. He wandered from city to city between the regions of Gujerat and Rajputana as a mendicant, until, sometime around the age of twenty-five, he took up his abode in the town of Sambhar, on the shores of the Salt Lake, in the Moghul province of Ajmer. There, he came into contact with a number of spiritual teachers and came under the tutelage of one called Shaikh Buddhan; but he was to claim no lineage from any tradition save the one common tradition of all mystics, and no teacher save the one interior Teacher common to all.

It was at Sambhar that Dadu became married and fathered four children; two sons and two daughters. As a householder, he practiced the trade of a cotton-carder; yet the holiness and authority of his discourses among his friends quickly earned for him a reputation as a holy man, and he began to attract a following of devoted disciples. Like Kabir, whom he greatly admired, Dadu knew both the Muslim and Hindu mystical traditions, and preferred not to be associated exclusively with either. He had experienced the One to whom both Muslims and Hindus aspire, and

attempted, by his teachings, to reconcile them in understanding of their common pursuit. He had known God directly, and had seen, therefore, how foolish are those who squabble over their petty ideas of God, and their various modes of external worship and behavior:

“One says ‘Swami,’ one says ‘Shaikh’; neither grasps the mystery of this world. One speaks of ‘Rama’ and the other of ‘Allah,’ but they have not known either Rama or Allah! ...Says Dadu: I am neither a Hindu nor a Muslim. I follow none of the Six Systems [of philosophy]; I worship the Merciful. Dadu belongs to neither faction: he is the slave of Allah-Rama. He who is without form or limitation, He alone is my Guru.”²

Naturally, such words as these were offensive to the orthodox Muslim legalists; and soon Dadu became a controversial figure in Sambhar, and found he had as many enemies as friends. A Muslim official, by the name of Buland Khan, assaulted Dadu, beat him, and had him jailed for his self-proclaimed infidelity to the doctrines of Islam. Shortly thereafter, Dadu decided to leave Sambhar. At the age of thirty-five, he moved to Amber, and was well-received there by the local Hindu ruler, Raja Bhagwan Das, and was supplied by him with a comfortable retreat on the shores of Lake Maota.

Bhagwan Das, while a Hindu, was brother to one of the wives of the Muslim emperor, Akbar; and was a commander of the royal armies. While at the emperor's court one day, he had occasion to mention to the emperor the presence in his kingdom of Dadu; and Akbar, who was always eager to meet with the saintly of all religious persuasions, remarked that he would like to meet him. Soon thereafter, a meeting was arranged between Dadu and Akbar at the emperor's palace at Sikri. To appreciate this historical meeting, it is necessary to know something about Akbar.

Padashah Akbar (d. 1605) was a descendent of the great conqueror, Babur (d. 1530). Babur, in whose veins flowed the blood of the Turkish ruler, Timur (the Tamerlane of English literature) and Genghis Khan, the Mongol, was succeeded by his son, Humayun, who was twenty-three when he ascended the throne as emperor of Hindustan. Humayun's son, Akbar, then came into power in 1556, at the age of thirteen, after his father fell from his library staircase and died as a result. Thereafter, Akbar proved himself a superior Commander-in-chief of the armies, and an indefatigable ruler of an ever-widening empire.

Akbar was an ambitious and ruthless warrior, and a crafty administrator, who accomplished the conquest and consolidation of nearly all of India under his rule; but he was also a man of unusual curiosity and tolerance concerning all religious traditions—a trait highly uncharacteristic of Muslim rulers of India up to that time. It is said that he had been influenced from his early youth by the teachings of the Sufis, and that he, himself, sought “to attain the ineffable bliss of direct contact with the Divine reality.”

In his eagerness to know as much as possible about the religious traditions of the various factions existing in his Empire, he met frequently with representatives of Sufism, Hinduism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism and Christianity. His interest was no doubt partly spiritual, partly intellectual, and partly political. In the naive hope of establishing a religious synthesis in which all religious ideals would be reconciled in one universal religion to be adopted throughout India, he built a universal “House of Worship,” and proclaimed his new religion, with himself as its titular and infallible head.

While this “new religion” was not to last beyond his own rule, it must be conceded that it had widespread beneficial effects throughout India, in establishing, at least, a temporary truce between the various warring religious factions. Though his attempt to form a universal religion, founded on Imperial decree rather than on direct spiritual experience, was naive and doomed to failure, it had the value of fostering a time of peace and tolerance between the Muslim and Hindu populations. It was, thus, under such tolerant and generous conditions, that Dadu was welcomed to the palace of Akbar in the Spring of 1584.

According to the account preserved by Dadu’s followers, when Dadu arrived at the palace, he was first met by the emperor’s representatives whose custom it was to interview those with whom Akbar was to meet. These representatives were Shaikh Abu-l Fazl and Raja Birbal. Abu-l Fazl, one of Akbar’s closest and most trusted advisors on religious matters, was himself a true Sufi. He greeted Dadu with these words: “We esteem you highly, O saintly Dadu, and desire to know more of your teaching. What God do you worship, and what is the manner of your worship?”

“The God we worship,” said Dadu, “is the Creator of all things. Our teaching is to hold Him in constant remembrance. Our mode of worship is to subdue the senses and sing the praise of Rama. To be sure, God is other than His name; He can neither be uttered nor comprehended. But men, for their own purposes, have given Him various names. Beholding in Him some attribute, they have given Him the name of that attribute. He deals graciously, and they call Him *Dayal*, the Gracious; as Protector of His creatures, He is styled *Gopal*, the Cowherd; as dwelling within

the heart, He is known as *Rama*; as showing mercy, He is *Rahim*, the Compassionate; as He who is beyond man's reach, He is called *Allah*; as unseen, He is known as *The Invisible*; as fashioner of all things, He is *Creator*; as transcending all limitation, He is the *Absolute*; as drawing men's hearts to Himself, He is *Mohan*, the Charmer; as pervading the universe, He is the *Omnipresent*. He accepts the homage of His true worshippers, and they witness His presence in the world.”³

Abu-l Fazl and Birbal were delighted with Dadu's conversation, and immediately made arrangements for him to see the emperor, Akbar. When, at last, Dadu was ushered into the royal presence, Akbar, after greeting him courteously, asked about his religious views, and Dadu explained to him the inner state of constant recollection of God. “But how,” Akbar asked, “is this inner state to be attained?” And Dadu replied, quoting a Persian verse:

“The soul, filled with passionate yearning, stands expectant at the door of vision; The surrendered heart dwells every moment in the Divine Presence, watchful, alert.”⁴

“First,” said Dadu, “a man must cease from the indulgence of the body, which binds him to the world. He must abandon all hope in the three worlds, and the Changeless One will surely reveal Himself.” They continued to talk of spiritual matters in this manner for some time, and, at the close of their interview, Akbar invited Dadu to return another time; but Dadu declined the invitation.

Nonetheless, before Dadu returned to Amber, Akbar sent for him to bid farewell, and Dadu went as bidden. “Tell me,” said Akbar, in this, their last meeting, “how one so enmeshed in the world's affairs as I am may find God. I am ready to love Him with every power of my being, and to school my heart in truth, if thus I may learn His secret.”

“Well spoken!” said Dadu; “Well spoken, indeed! That is the sum of all I have to say. May God keep you ever in this frame of mind.”

Akbar bowed his head. “Swami,” he said, “you have given, and I have received.”

With this, Dadu returned the emperor's bow, and bestowed the blessing hitherto withheld: “I pray the indwelling God to keep you continually in His protection and favor.”⁵

That evening, everyone gathered together to sing religious hymns, and to honor

Dadu before his departure. And in the morning Dadu returned to Amber, where he was congratulated by Bhagwan Das on the splendid impression he had made on the emperor. This little scenario of Dadu with the emperor Akbar is interesting as a look into the court life of the time, but even more so as a portrait of Dadu, who appears as natural and sincere in the emperor's presence as on the dusty roads with his disciples. We see these same qualities in the many songs and utterances of Dadu, which were collected after his death. Dadu had set down in written form, at different times throughout his life, his thoughts, convictions, and experiences of God. Extending over a long period of time, they vary from prayers to spiritual directives, from yearning for God to proclamations of His unity. In all of these songs and utterances, one senses a real man, blunt and ordinary at times, but always totally honest with himself, and utterly impatient with phoniness and pretense.

Dadu's songs remind us a good deal of those of Kabir or Nanak, but they have a quality of roughness and independence which is wholly his own. He was openly critical of all that smacked of "the business of religion," and most especially of those who paraded as Gurus and accumulated disciples for their own aggrandizement, wealth and power. "The disciple is the cow," said Dadu; "and the Guru is the milker of the cow. Great care does he take of his cow, and well he might, when he makes his living by him!"

Dadu, himself, was a true Guru, in the best sense of the word. He had attained the Highest, yet he never seemed to posture or lose sight of his own humble station before God. Some of his songs of yearning for the vision of God, for example, remind us of the tenderest of the Hebrew Psalms, or the writings of the Christian saint, Juan de la Cruz:

"Ah me! oft do I feel such pangs of separation from my
Beloved that I am like to die unless I see Him.
Maiden, hearken to the tale of my agony; I am restless without my
Beloved.
In my yearning desire for the Beloved I break into song day and night;
I pour out my woes like the nightingale.
Ah me! Who will bring me to my Beloved?
Who will show me His path and console my heart?
Dadu says: O Lord, let me see Thy face, even for a moment, and be
blessed."⁶

"He sits close at hand; he hears everything, yet He doesn't answer me.

Dadu casts himself on Thee; take away this life of mine.
 Everyone I see is happy; no one is in distress.
 Yet sore distressed is thy servant Dadu, because I see Thee not face to face.
 No one in all the world is in such deep distress as I;
 I weep floods of tears in my longing to meet the Beloved.
 I find Him not, neither can I find peace without Him.
 Tell me, how can I continue to live?

He who wounded me is the only one who can heal me.
 Sighing for the vision, this lonely one lives apart;
 enduring the pangs of separation, Dadu awaits Thy coming, O Hari!
 He who ardently yearns for the meeting, like a fish taken out of water,
 He alone beholds Thy vision; he is joined to Thy Spirit.
 This lonely one, separated from Rama, does not find Him;
 Dadu writhes like a fish, till Thou hast mercy upon him.”⁷

Dadu continued to live in Amber for many years, teaching his disciples and writing his songs of love to his Lord. But, as at Sambhar, there were many of the orthodoxy, Hindu and Muslim alike, who resented his words, which they interpreted as critical of their beliefs. And so, after fourteen years in Amber, Dadu was forced to leave that city, and for nearly ten years thereafter, he moved from town to town and city to city with his close disciples, welcomed everywhere he went by both peasantry and royalty; until, at the city of Nairana, in the year 1603, in the company of his many beloved disciples and his two sons, he passed away.

The many songs and utterances (*Bani*), which Dadu left behind, comprise today the holy book of the Dadu-panthis. Here are just a few:

“Be done with self and worship Hari; cast off worldly desire in mind and body.
 Cherish goodwill towards every living creature; this, says Dadu, is the sum of religion.

He is the true saint who bears enmity to none;
 There is but one Spirit, and he has no enemy.
 I have made diligent quest: truly, there is no second.
 In every man is the one Spirit, whether he be Hindu or Muslim.
 Both brethren have alike hands and feet, both have ears;
 Both brethren have eyes, be they Hindus or Muslims.

When you look in the mirror of ignorance, there appears to be two;
 When error is dispelled and ignorance vanishes, there is no 'other.'
 To whom then will you bear enmity, when there is no other?
 He from whose Being all sprang, the same One dwells in all.
 In every man is the one Spirit; hold Him therefore in reverent respect.
 Recognize that Spirit in yourself and others; it is the manifestation of
 the Lord.

Why give pain to any when the indwelling Rama is in every man?
 O revered Self, give peace and contentment;
 for there is none but Thee in all the three worlds.
 When the soul perceives the Self, then are all souls brethren;
 Give your heart to Him who is the Creator of all.
 When a dog wanders into a palace of mirrors,
 it sees its own reflection everywhere and begins barking.
 See how the One has likewise become many, and angrily seeks to
 destroy itself.

All souls are brother-souls, the offspring of one Womb;
 Consider this truth! Who, then, is the other, O foolish man?
 All came in one likeness; it was the Lord who sent them;
 They have all taken different names, and thus become separate.
 Worship the divine Self, and bear hatred toward none;
 In this worship you will find peace, in hatred only sorrow.”⁸

“Teach me, O Hari, to reverence Thy pure Name,
 that my heart may be glad in Thy worship.
 Make my heart to overflow with love, devotion, yearning, O Hari!
 Make me gentle in speech and humble of bearing, rejoicing in Thy
 presence, O Rama!
 Fill me with spiritual longing, detachment from the world, and a
 loving heart.
 May I steadfastly cherish the desire to remain ever devoted to Thy feet.
 Grant me quiet contentment and self-control,
 and keep my heart firmly directed toward Thee.
 O Ever-Present, awaken me to the sense of Thy constant presence.
 O Mohan, grant me knowledge, and the power of meditation,
 that my mind may continually turn to Thee.
 O Lord of the humble, grant that the Light of lights may illumine
 Dadu's heart.”⁹

“While the mind is unstable, there can be no union;
 When the mind becomes stable, He will be found with ease.
 How can the mind remain firm without some resting place?
 It merely keeps wandering here and there.
 It will become stable only when you settle it on the remembrance of
 God.

Where you hold fast to His Name with a steadfast mind—there, says
 Dadu, is Rama.
 Delight in the remembrance of Hari; then will the mind become
 steadfast.
 When it has tasted the fellowship of love, it will not move away a
 single step.
 When it is fixed on the One within, it finds no joy in other attractions;
 Fixed firmly there, it does not wander anywhere else.
 Like a gull, perched on a boat’s mast in mid-ocean, the mind,
 After it has grown weary of flying here and there, has found its
 resting-place.

Then only does my soul find peace and happiness, when my mind has
 become stable, steadfastly fixed on Rama.
 If only one could learn this secret!
 The pure mind is stable; its joy is in the name of Rama.
 In this way, you too shall find the vision of Him who is supreme and
 perfect Bliss.”¹⁰

“Wonderful is the Name; it holds the truth of the three worlds.
 Considering this, O heart, repeat it night and day.
 Wonderful is the Name; let the heart never forget Hari.
 Let His image dwell in the heart; cherish it with every breath.
 When you cherish Him with every breath, one day He will come to
 meet you.
 ... Abandon all other means of approach and devote yourself to the
 Name of Rama.”¹¹

“... The Creator has many and diverse names:
 Choose the name that comes to mind; thus, do all the saints practice
 remembrance.

The Lord who endowed us with soul and body—worship Him in your heart;

Worship Him by that name which best suits the moment.” ¹²

“Many great scholars there are, and brave imparters of wisdom;

Religious garbs are endless. But rarely is one found who is wholly devoted to God’s service.

... If you can understand, I will speak: There is one ineffable Truth;

Be done with the leaves and branches and go for the root.

What does mere garb signify?

Devising all manner of costumes, men array themselves [as devotees];

Yet how few take the way of self-effacement and the worship of Hari!

All the world are actors; rare is the real sadhu.

... There is but one Spirit; the Lord is in all.

Therefore, let your union be with the Lord, not with a sect or mode of dress.

Rosaries and sect-marks are of no avail; what have I to do with them?

Within me is One who is mine; day and night I take His Name.

All look to the outward appearance, and do not perceive what is within;

The outward is what is shown to the world, but Rama reveals Himself within.

Hari, the all-knowing Lord, accepts only what is of the heart;

To Rama, the truth is dear, despite a thousand pretenses.

Hari receives, not the word spoken by the lips, but the intent of the heart.

... True love is the most wondrous of signs;

the soul who aches for the vision of God is the true sadhu.” ¹³

Without a torturing thirst, how should one drink the bliss of communion with the Lord?

O God, give me an aching desire to behold the vision of Thee!

Desire [for God] does not arise without the pain of separation;

How could love exist without this pain?

Without love all is false, try however hard you may.

The pain of separation is not born of words; desire [for God] is not born of words.

Love cannot be found through words. Let no one put his faith in them.” ¹⁴

“Where Rama is, there I am not; where I am, there Rama is not.
 This mansion is of delicate construction; there is no place for two.
 While self remains, so long will there be a second;
 When this selfhood is blotted out, then there is no other.
 When I am not, there is but One; when I obtrude, then two.
 When the veil of “I” is taken away, then does the One become as It
 was.”¹⁵

“Have done with pride and arrogance, conceit, envy, self-assertion;
 Practice humility, and obedience; worship the Creator.
 When a man has abandoned false pride, arrogance, and vainglory,
 when he has become humble and meek, then does he find true bliss.
 Prince and beggar alike must die; not one survives.
 Him you should call “living” who has died and yet lives.
 My enemy “I” is dead; now none can smite me down.
 ‘Tis I who have slain myself; thus, being dead, I live.
 We have slain our enemy, we have died; but he is not forgotten;
 The thorn remains to vex us. Consider and lay this truth to heart:
 You will only find the Beloved when you are as the living dead;
 Only by losing yourself can you find Him who knows all.
 When you regard yourself as nothing, then you will find the Beloved.
 Recognize, therefore, by quiet reflection, from whence this thought of
 self arises.
 Becoming as the living dead, enter onto the path;
 First bow down your head, then may you venture to plant your foot
 [on this path].

Know that the path of discipleship is exceedingly hard;
 The living dead walk it, with the Name of Rama as their guide.
 So difficult is the path, no living man may tread it;
 He only can walk it, O foolish man, who has died and lives.
 Only he who is dead can tread the path that leads to God;
 He finds the Beloved and leaps the fearsome gulf.
 He that is alive shall die; and only by dying inwardly shall he meet
 with the Lord.
 Forsaking His fellowship, who could endure when trouble comes?

O when will this dominion of self pass away? When will the heart
forget every 'other'?
When will it be made wholly pure? When will it find its true home?
When I am not, then there is One; when I intrude, then two.
When the curtain of 'I' and 'Thou' is drawn aside,
then do I become as I was [in the Beginning]." ¹⁶

"My enemy 'I' is now dead; now none can slay me.
'Tis I who have slain myself; I have died, and yet live.
While the thought of self remains, so long are there two.
When this selfhood is destroyed, then there is no second.
Then only will you find the Beloved, when 'I' and 'mine' are wholly
lost.

When 'I' and 'mine' are no more, then shall you find the pure vision.
'I' and 'mine' are a load upon the head; you die with the weight of it.
By the grace of the Master, remove it and lay it down.
In front of [the true] I, stands the [false] I; for this reason, He remains
hidden.

When this [false]selfhood passes away, the Beloved is revealed.
Hide yourself where no one can see you;
See and show forth only the Beloved.
Then you shall find eternal happiness.
If there is no inward thought of self, but the mouth still utters the
words, 'I' and 'Thou,'
Let no one make this a matter of reproach; for it is in this way that
they ['I' and 'Thou'] hold communion with one another.
When others see that devotee who, having abandoned self, is wholly
devoted to Rama,
Then they too are led toward the Lord." ¹⁷

"Omniscient God, it is by Thy grace alone that I have been blessed
with vision of Thee.
Thou knowest all; what can I say?
All-knowing God, I can conceal nothing from Thee.
I have nothing that deserves Thy grace.
No one can reach Thee by his own efforts; Thou showest

Thyself by Thine own grace.
 How could I approach Thy presence?
 By what means could I gain Thy favor?
 And by what powers of mind or body could I attain to Thee?
 It hath pleased Thee in Thy mercy to take me under Thy wing.
 Thou alone art the Beginning and the End; Thou art the Creator of the
 three worlds.
 Dadu says: I am nothing and can do nothing.
 Truly, even a fool may reach Thee by Thy grace. ¹⁸

“Many have spoken and passed on, but the mystery remains unsolved.
 We too speak, but what more can we say?
 What do I know, what can I speak, concerning that almighty One?
 What knowledge have I of His manner of being?
 It utterly passes my comprehension.
 How many have spoken and passed on; even the wisest have spent
 their powers in vain.
 ...There, neither silence nor speech exists;
 no ‘I’ or ‘Thou’, no self or other, neither one nor two.
 If I say “One,” there are two; if I say “two,” there is but One.
 The Magician who devised this play—go and enquire of Him.
 How He fashioned the many from the One, let the Master Himself
 make plain.” ¹⁹

* * *

NOTES:

1. Bani 190, 191; Orr, W.G., *A Sixteenth Century Indian Mystic*, London, Lutterworth Press, 1947; pp. 93-94. This article on Dadu is taken from my book, *History of Mysticism*, which contains many other articles on the world’s great mystics and their teachings. *History of Mysticism* may be downloaded as a free PDF document from the ‘Downloads’ page on my website: www.themysticsvision.com.
2. *Ibid.*; p. 62.
3. *Ibid.*; pp. 32-33.
4. *Ibid.*; p. 33.
5. *Ibid.*; p. 33-34.
6. Psalm 7, Pad 151; *Ibid.*; p. 66.
7. *Ibid.*; pp. 174-175.
8. *Ibid.*; pp. 191-192.

9. Psalm 181, *Ibid.*; p. 124.
10. *Ibid.*; pp. 170-171.
11. *Ibid.*; p. 141.
12. *Ibid.*; p. 140.
13. *Ibid.*; p. 103.
14. *Ibid.*; p. 168.
15. Parcha, *Ibid.*; p. 66.
16. Jiwat Mritak, *Ibid.*; pp. 105-106.
17. *Ibid.*; pp. 162-163.
18. *Ibid.*; p. 142.
19. Hairan, *Ibid.*; p. 101.

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15. The Mystical Tradition of Christianity (*from Body And Soul, 2012*)

Judaism, while proudly monotheistic, never advanced to a Nondual perspective. The patriarchal figures, Abraham and Moses, were said to have spoken with God, but neither is said to have experienced *oneness with God*; that is, they never experienced the Divine identity as their own. And since orthodox Judaism refuses to abrogate the authority of the patriarchs, a strict doctrinal separation between God and His creation is maintained, and the possibility of the “union” of man and God is disavowed; though, in recent times, scattered mystics of the esoteric Hasidic and Kabbalistic schools within the Judaic tradition have taught the possibility of ‘the mystical union’ with God.

When Christianity came into existence, Judaism was rightly viewed as its foundational background, since Jesus, the founder and object of Christian worship, was born and raised in the Jewish religious tradition. We have every reason to assume, therefore, that Jesus assented to the Biblical account of Creation in the book of Genesis. However, when Jesus experienced God directly, leading him to proclaim his essential unity with God, he presented a threat to the Judaic theological doctrine of the separation of man from God, and thereby aroused the ire of the Jewish orthodoxy. It wasn’t long before these religious legalists hounded and arrested Jesus and put him to death in a public manner usually reserved for enemies of the state under Roman law. Jesus had been merely an obscure Jewish mystic, but the story of his brief life and tragic death spread far and wide, and

eventually inspired and raised the spiritual aspirations of generations of people all over the world.

All great religious teachers have taught according to their own intimate experience of God, their “mystical vision”—whether it is called “*samadhi*,” “*nirvana*,” “*fana*,” or “union with God.” Since there is but one ultimate Reality, which all share, each one who has experienced the Truth within has experienced that same ultimate Reality. Naturally, therefore, their teachings about it are bound to be identical.¹ However, the languages and cultures of the various teachers who have lived throughout history are, no doubt, different from one another. Their personalities and life-styles are different. But their vision is one, and the path they teach to it is universal. In the mystical experience, which transcends all religious traditions and cultures and languages, the Christian, the Buddhist, the Muslim, and the Vedantist alike come to the same realization: They realize the oneness of their own soul and God, the Soul of the universe. It is this very experience, which prompted Jesus, the originator of Christianity, to explain at various times to his disciples that he had known the great Unity in which he and the Father of the universe are one:

“If you knew who I am,” he said, “you would also know the Father. Knowing me, you know Him; seeing me, you see Him. Do you not understand that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? It is the Father who dwells in me doing His own work. Understand me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.”²

This was not a personal vanity on the part of Jesus; this was a universally realizable and applicable theological perspective. This is the truth that Vedanta speaks of as “Nondualism.” The term, “Unity,” is, of course, the same in meaning; but it seems that the declaration, “not-two” is more powerfully emphatic than a mere assertion of oneness. Indeed, the word, “Unity” is often used by religionists who apply it to God, but who have not even considered the thought that they themselves are logically included in an *absolute* Unity. Nondualism, the philosophy of absolute Unity, is the central teaching, not only of Vedanta, but of all genuine seers of Truth. This position is embodied in the Vedantic assertion, *tat twam asi*, “That thou art.”

Once we begin to look at the teachings of Jesus in the light of his “mystical” experience of Unity, we begin to have a much clearer perspective on all the aspects of his teachings. His teachings, like those of the various Vedantic sages who’ve taught throughout the ages, is that the soul of man is none other than the one Divinity, none other than God; and that this Divine Identity can be experienced and known through the revelation that occurs inwardly, by the grace of God, to those

who prepare and purify their minds and hearts to receive it. The words of Jesus are so well known to us from our childhood that, perhaps, they have lost their meaning through our over familiarity with them. He attempted to explain to us, with the words, “I and the Father are one,” that the “I,” our own inner awareness of self, is none other than the one Self, the one Awareness, the Lord and Father of us all.

Why, then, are we so unable to see it? Why should it be so hard for us to attain to that purity of heart, which Jesus declared so essential to His vision? Probably because we have not really tried—not the way Jesus did, going off into the wilderness, jeopardizing everything else in his life for this one aim, focusing completely and entirely on attaining the vision of God. Not the way the Buddha did. Not the way all those who have experienced God, the one Self, have done. Perhaps we’re not ready for such a concentrated effort just yet. Perhaps we have other desires yet to dispense with before we will be free enough to seek so high a goal. For us, perhaps, there is yet much to be done to soften the heart, so that we are pure enough to hear the call of Divine Grace. It is to such as us, for whom much yet needs to be accomplished toward the attainment of a “pure heart,” that Jesus spoke.

All of what Jesus taught to his disciples was by way of explaining to them that his real nature, and that of all men, is Divine; and that the reality of this could be realized directly. Let us look to his own words to corroborate this: In the Gospel book of John, he laments to God, “O righteous Father, the world has not known Thee. But I have known Thee.”³ And, as he sat among the orthodox religionists in the Jewish temple, he said, “You say that He is your God, yet you have not known Him. But I have known Him.”⁴ Jesus had “known” God directly at the time of his initiation by John the Baptist, and probably more deeply during his time in the wilderness; and that experience had separated him and effectively isolated him from his brothers, because he alone among his contemporaries seemed to possess this rare certain knowledge of the truth of all existence.

This is the difficult plight of all those who have been graced with “the vision of God.” It is the greatest of gifts, it is the greatest of all possible visions; and yet, because the knowledge so received is completely contrary to what all men believe regarding God and the soul, it is a terribly alienating knowledge, which brings upon its possessor the scorn and derision of all mankind. History is replete with examples of others who, having attained this saving knowledge, found the world unwilling to accept it, and ready to defend its ignorance aggressively. This circumstance is little changed today.

Because the “vision” of God was so difficult to convey to those who had not experienced it, Jesus spoke often by way of analogy or metaphor in order to make his meaning clear. He spoke of the experience of “seeing” God as entering into a realm beyond this world, a realm where only God is. In his own Aramaic language, he called this realm *malkutha*. In the Greek translation, it is *basileia*. In English, it is usually rendered as “the kingdom of God.”

“His disciples asked him, “When will the kingdom come?” Jesus said, “It will not come by waiting for it. It will not be a matter of saying ‘Here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’ Rather, the kingdom of the Father is [already] spread out upon the earth, and [yet] men do not see it.”⁵

“... Indeed, what you look forward to has already come, but you do not recognize it.”⁶

“The Pharisees asked him, ‘When will the kingdom of God come?’ He said, ‘You cannot tell by signs [I.e., by observations] when the kingdom of God will come. There will be no saying, “Look, here it is!” or “There it is!” For, in fact, the kingdom of God is [experienced] within you.’”⁷

“Jesus said, “If those who lead you say to you, “See, the kingdom is in the sky,” then the birds of the sky will have preceded you. If they say to you, “It is in the sea,” then the fish will precede you. Rather the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you [as well]. When you come to know your Self, then you [I.e., your true nature] will be known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living Father. But if you will not know your Self, you live in poverty [I.e., you live in the illusion that you are a pitiful creature far from God].”⁸

Another of Jesus’ metaphors utilized the terms, “Light” and “darkness” to represent the Divinity and the inherent delusion of man, respectively:

“Jesus said, ‘The world’s images are manifest to man, but the Light in them remains concealed; within the image is the Light of the Father. He becomes manifest as the images, but, as the Light, He is concealed’.”⁹

“He said to them, ‘There is a Light within a man of Light, and It lights up the whole world. If it does not shine [within that man], he is in darkness.’”¹⁰

Light and *darkness* are terms which have been used since time immemorial to represent the Divine Consciousness in man and the hazy ignorance, which obscures It. In the very first paragraph of the Gospel of John, we find an excellent explanation of these two principles, and their Greek synonyms, *Theos* and *Logos*;

“In the beginning was the Logos [the creative Power of God], and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. He [or It] was with God in the beginning. All things were made by Him; without Him nothing was made. Within Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of man. And the Light shone in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended It not.”¹¹

A word of explanation is necessary: These two terms, “Light and “darkness,” are also indicative of the cosmic aspects of Reality; in other words, they are not only the Divine Consciousness in man and the darkness of unknowing, but they are, at a higher level, the very Godhead and Its Power of manifestation. They are those same two principles we have so often run into, called “Brahman and Maya,” “Purusha and Prakrti,” “Shiva and Shakti.” It is the Godhead in us, which provides the Light in us; it is the manifestory principle, which, in the process of creating an individual soul-mind-body, provides us with all the obscuration necessary to keep us in the dark as to our infinite and eternal Identity.

“Jesus said, ‘If they ask you, “Where did you come from?” say to them, ‘We came from the Light, the place where the Light came into being of Its own accord and established Itself and became manifest through our image.’”

“If they ask you, ‘Are you It?’ say, ‘We are Its children, and we are the elect of the living Father.’ If they ask you, ‘What is the sign of your Father in you?’ say to them, ‘It is movement and repose.’”¹²

“Jesus said, ‘I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest. Everything came forth from me, and everything returns to me. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift a stone, and you will find me there.’”¹³

Here, Jesus identifies with the Eternal Light; but it is clear that he never intended to imply that he was uniquely and exclusively identical with It; his intention was always to convey the truth that *all* men are, in essence, the transcendent Consciousness, the very Light of God, manifest in form:

“Ye *are* the Light of the world. Let your Light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”¹⁴

Frequently he declared to his followers that they too would come to the same realization that he had experienced:

“I tell you this,” he said to them; “there are some of those standing here who will not taste death before they have seen the kingdom of God already come in full power.”¹⁵

“The heavens and the earth will be rolled up in your presence. And the one who lives from the living ONE will not see death. Have I not said: ‘whoever finds his Self is superior to the world?’”¹⁶

“Take heed of the living ONE while you are alive, lest you die and seek to see Him and be unable to do so.”¹⁷

“That which you have will save you if you bring It forth from yourselves. That which you do not have within you will destroy you.”¹⁸

“That which you have” is, of course, the Truth, the Light, the Divinity who manifests as you. “That which you do not have” refers to the ego, the false identity of separate individuality, which is simply a lie. It is the wrong understanding of who you are that limits you, and which prevents you from experiencing your eternal Self.

The teaching, common to all true “mystics” who have realized the Highest, is “You *are* the Light of the world! You *are* That! Identify with the Light, the Truth, for That is who you really are!” And yet Jesus did not wish that this should remain a mere matter of faith with his disciples; he wished them to realize this truth for themselves. And he taught them the method by which he had come to know God. Like all great seers, he knew both the means and the end, he knew both the One and the many. Thus, we hear in the message of Jesus an apparent ambiguity, which is necessitated by the paradoxical nature of the Reality.

In the One, the two—soul and God—play their love-game of devotion. At one moment, the soul speaks of God, its “Father”; at another moment, it is identified with God, and speaks of “I.” Likewise, in the words of Jesus to his disciples, we see this same complementarity: At one moment, he speaks of dualistic devotion in the form of prayer (“Our Father, who art in heaven”); and at another moment he asserts his oneness, his identity, with God (“Lift the stone and I am there ...”). But

he cautioned his disciples against offending others with this attitude (“If they ask you, ‘Are you It?’ say, ‘We are Its children ...’”).

At times, identifying with the One, he asserts that he has the power to grant the experience of Unity (“I shall give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched and what has never occurred to the human mind”).¹⁹ And at other times, identifying with the human soul, he gives all credit to God, the Father (“Why do you call me good? There is no one good but the ONE, that is God.”).²⁰

There is an interesting story that appears in both Matthew and Luke which illustrates the knowledge, from the standpoint of the individual soul, that the realization of God comes, not by any deed of one’s own, but solely by the grace of God: Jesus had just commented upon how difficult it would be for a young man, otherwise spiritually inclined, who was attached to his worldly wealth and occupations, to realize God (“It would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle”); and his disciples, who were gathered around, were somewhat disturbed by this, and asked, “Then, who *can* attain salvation?” And Jesus answered, “For man it is impossible; but for God it is possible.”

And Peter, understanding that Jesus is denying that any man, by his own efforts, can bring about that experience, but only God, by His grace, gives this enlightenment, objected: “But we here have left our belongings to become your followers!” And Jesus, wishing to assure them that any effort toward God-realization will bear its fruits in this life and in lives to come, said to them: “I tell you this; there is no one who has given up home, or wife, brothers, parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not be repaid many times over in this time, and in the time to come [will] know eternal Life.”²¹ He could guarantee to no one that knowledge of God; that was in the hands of God. But Jesus knew that whatever efforts one makes toward God must bear their fruits in this life, and in the lives to come.

And so, throughout the teachings of Jesus, one finds these two, apparently contradictory, attitudes intermingled: the attitude of the knower, or *jnani*: (“I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest”); and the attitude of the devoted soul, or *bhakta*: (“Father, father, why hast Thou forsaken me?”). They are the two voices of the illumined man, for he is both, the transcendent Unity and the imaged soul; he has “seen” this unity in the “mystical experience” of oneness.

Jesus had experienced the ultimate Truth; he had clearly seen and known It beyond any doubt; and he knew that the consciousness that lived as him was the one Consciousness of all. He knew that he was the living Awareness from which this

entire universe is born. This was the certain, indubitable, truth; and yet Jesus found but few who could even comprehend it. For the most part, those to whom he spoke were well-meaning religionists who were incapable of accepting the profound meaning of his words. The religious orthodoxy of his time, like all such orthodoxies, fostered a self-serving lip-service to spiritual ideals, and observed all sorts of symbolic rituals, but was entirely ignorant of the fact that the ultimate reality could be directly known by a pure and devout soul, and that this was the real purpose of all religious practice.

Jesus realized, of course, that despite the overwhelming influence of the orthodox religionists, still, in his own Judaic tradition, there had been other seers of God, who had known and taught this truth. “I come,” said Jesus, “not to destroy the law [of the Prophets], but to fulfill it.”²² He knew also that any person who announced the fact that he had seen and known God would be persecuted and belittled and regarded as an infidel and a liar. In the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus is reported to have said, “He who knows the Father (the transcendent Absolute) and the Mother (the creative Principle) will be called a son-of-a-bitch!”²³ It seems he was making a pun on the fact that one who does *not* know his father and mother is usually referred to in this fashion; but, in his case, he had known the Father of the universe, and knew the Power (of Mother Nature) behind the entire creation, and still he was called this derisive name.

It is the common experience of all the great seers, from Lao Tze to Socrates and Heraclitus, from Plotinus and al-Hallaj to Meister Eckhart and St. John of the Cross. All were cruelly tortured and persecuted for their goodness and wisdom stemming from the ‘vision’ graciously granted by God. Jesus too found the world of men wanting in understanding; he said:

“I took my place in the midst of the world, and I went among the people. I found all of them intoxicated [with pride and ignorance]; I found none of them thirsty [for Truth]. And my soul became sorrowful for the sons of men, because they are blind in their hearts and do not have vision. Empty they came into the world, and empty they wish to leave the world. But, for the moment, they are intoxicated; when they shake off their wine, then they will repent.”²⁴

Jesus had taught the mystical path to his disciples; but few of his followers, either during his lifetime or after, could follow him into those rare heights. After he was persecuted and executed for expounding his unitive vision, his followers began to gather together for inspiration, and the small gatherings soon developed into a sizable church organization. And, when the few became many, diverse interests

inevitably came into play: some were attracted to contemplation; some to charitable or teaching activities; and some preferred to deify their master, Jesus, as an object of ritual worship.

Jesus never formulated a detailed metaphysics to guide his followers. A metaphysics developed around him nonetheless, fueled not only by his Judaic background, but by the persuasive Greek influence of the times. In particular, the Greek philosophical concept of the *Logos* played an important part in the metaphysics of the early Christian theologians.

The common Greek word, *logos*, was originally understood in several different ways; one of which was as “intention, hypothesis, or thought”. Heraclitus, in the 4th century B.C.E., the first to use the word in a metaphysical sense, intended by it the Divine Intelligence by which all the world is pervaded. Much later, a contemporary of Jesus, Philo Judaeus, who was an influential Alexandrian Jew with strong ties to the Greek, and specifically the Platonic, philosophical tradition, used the word to denote the Thought in the Mind of God, from whence the Idea of the world took form. Here is how he expressed it:

“God who, having determined to found a mighty state, first of all conceived its form in his mind, according to which form he made a world perceptible only by the intellect, and then completed one visible to the external senses, using the first one as a model. ...It is manifest also, that the archetypal seal, which we call that world which is perceptible only to the intellect, must itself be the archetypal model, the idea of ideas, the *Logos* of God.” ²⁵

“...The incorporeal [spiritual] world then was already completed, having its seat in the Divine *Logos*; and the world, perceptible by the external senses, was made on the model of it.” ²⁶

For Philo, the *Logos* was not only the Idea in the mind of God but was that very Ideational Power of God that Plotinus would later call *Nous*, or “The Divine Mind”. Philo, acknowledging that the *Logos* was the creative Power of the One, referred to it as “the first-born of God,” because ‘It was conceived in God’s mind before all things, and is that which manifests as all things.’ ²⁷

One of the four Gospel authors, living in the 1st or 2nd century C.E., and known to us only as ‘John’, was apparently familiar with the writings of Philo, and taking his theological cue from him, began his Gospel with these words:

“In the beginning was the Logos, the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. ...All things were made by the Logos; without him, nothing was made. It was by him that all things came into existence.” ²⁸

This was, of course, quite in keeping with the Philonian concept; but then John added these words:

“And the Logos became flesh and lived among us...as the only-begotten son of his father.” ²⁹

In the words that followed, John made clear he was referring to Jesus of Nazareth whom John the Baptist had declared was the Messiah at the time he baptized Jesus in the river Jordan.

Some of the most influential Christian theologians and apologists, such as Justin Martyr (100-165 C.E.), Irenaeus (130-200 C.E.), Tertullian (150-225 C.E.), and others, jumped on this bandwagon, campaigning strongly for the recognition of Jesus as synonymous with the *Logos*, or Creative Power, of God; though there were others, called *alogi*, who were against this idea. And so, there was much argument and discussion among these early Christians. It was a time when theological and metaphysical ideas were very much ‘in the air’; and it is clear that many of the learned Christian theologians and Apologists of the time were influenced not only by the Judaic tradition, but by the Platonist vision, as well as by the writings of Philo Judaeus, and possibly the Gnostics, Hermetics and Stoics as well. Borrowing the terminology of Philo, as echoed by the Gospel writer, John, they regarded the *Logos* much the way Plotinus regarded *Nous*, the Divine Mind: as the active Creative power of the transcendent Godhead, or “the One”. For the Christians, the Godhead was referred to as “the Spirit” or “the Father”, and His Creative power was referred to as “the Logos” or “the Son”. According to Tertullian (150-225):

“The Spirit is the substance of the Logos, and the Logos is the activity of the Spirit; the two are a unity (*unum*).” ³⁰

The Christian Apologist, Athenagoras (133-190) wrote:

“If you ask what is meant by the Son, I will state briefly that he is the first product of the Father, not as having been brought into existence (for from the beginning, God, who is the eternal Mind has the Logos in Himself, being from eternity instinct with Logos); but inasmuch as

the Logos came forth to be the Idea and energizing power of all material things.”³¹

Later, Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria (293-372), using the very analogy of the Sun’s radiation often used later by Plotinus, says:

“Was God, who IS, ever without the Logos? Was He, who is light, ever without radiance? ...God is, eternally; then, since the Father always is, His radiance also exists eternally; and that is His Logos.³²
...The Logos of God *is* creator and maker; he *is* the Father’s will.”³³

From these many theological interchanges a consensus arose; and the historical Jesus became permanently associated with the *Logos* and was thereafter regarded by Christians as an incarnation of God; or, in popular circles, ‘the Son of God’. Then, to the duality of the Father and Son was added the “Spirit” or “Holy Ghost”—thus constituting a holy Trinity, comparable to Plotinus’ trinity of The One, the Divine Mind, and Soul. This doctrine of the ‘Holy Trinity’ became firmly established as a metaphysical tenet of the Church with the formulation of the Nicene Creed following the first ecumenical council assembled by emperor Constantine in 325 C.E., and the Athenasian Creed, penned around the same time—though in later years Christendom would become bitterly divided in its acceptance of this tenet.

All the great teachers of Spirituality have offered a description of and commentary on the nature of Reality as directly experienced in “the mystical vision.” Only those who have actually experienced the Truth directly are able to speak authoritatively about it. And, the fact is, there have been many wise and pure-hearted men and women of every nationality and every religious affiliation who have experienced the Truth. There are Christians who have experienced It, and Jews, and Muslims, and Hindus, and Buddhists, and so on. And so, we must include as part of our Spiritual heritage the teachings and writings of all those of various traditions who have directly realized the Truth and spoken of It.

Let us consider, for example, some of those Christians who taught Spiritual Truth under the name of Christianity. They are the seers, the mystics of the Church, who taught the path to God-realization, and who proclaimed the identity of the soul and God, and the indivisibility of the one absolute Reality. First among these, of course, is Jesus of Nazareth, called “the anointed one,” or *Christos*, in the language of the Greeks. It is of his own mystical experience that Jesus spoke, a mystical experience that transcends all doctrines and all traditions, and that is identical for Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Vedantists alike. It is an experience of absolute

Unity—a Unity in which the individual consciousness of the soul merges into its Divine Source, and knows, “I and the Father are one.”

Ironically, however, this knowledge is unacceptable in all conventional religious traditions; and so, those, like Jesus, al Hallaj, Meister Eckhart, Spinoza, and many others who have experienced the Truth, are inevitably rejected by the religious traditions to which they belong. The religious tradition, which arose around the teachings of Jesus, commonly rejects and persecutes its mystics as well.

Nonetheless, down through the centuries, a few of the followers of Jesus also experienced the spiritual unity, by the grace of God, and spoke of It for posterity. Here, for example, is what the famous Christian mystic of the 13th century, Meister Eckhart, had to say about his own experience:

“As the soul becomes more pure and bare and poor, and possesses less of created things, and is emptied of all things that are not God, it receives God more purely, and is more completely in Him; and it truly becomes one with God, and it looks into God and God into it, face to face as it were; two images transformed into one. “... Some simple people think that they will see God as if He were standing there and they here. It is not so. God and I, we are one.”³⁴

“... I am converted into Him in such a way that He makes me one Being with Himself—not (simply) a similar being. By the living God, it is true that there is no distinction!”³⁵

Or this, by the 15th century Christian Bishop, Nicholas of Cusa:

“Thou dost ravish me above myself that I may foresee the glorious place whereunto Thou callest me. Thou grantest me to behold the treasure of riches, of life, of joy, of beauty. Thou keepest nothing secret.”³⁶

“I behold Thee, O Lord my God, in a kind of mental trance,³⁷ ... and when I behold Thee, nothing is seen other than Thyself; for Thou art Thyself the object of Thyself, for Thou seest, and art That which is seen, and art the sight as well.”³⁸

“Hence, in Thee, who are love, the lover is not one thing and the beloved another, and the bond between them a third, but they are one and the same: Thou, Thyself, my God. For there is nothing in Thee that is not Thy very essence.”³⁹ Nothing exists outside Thee, and all things in Thee are not other than Thee.”⁴⁰

Or listen to this, by the 16th century Christian monk, St. John of the Cross:

“What God communicates to the soul in this intimate union is totally beyond words. In this transformation, the two become one.”⁴¹

“... The soul thereby becomes Divine, becomes God, through participation, insofar as is possible in this life.

“... The union wrought between the two natures, and the communication of the Divine to the human in this state is such that even though neither changes their being, both appear to be God.”⁴²

“... Having been made one with God, the soul is somehow God through participation.”⁴³

This is the truth revealed in “the mystical vision,” the truth that Vedanta speaks of as “Nonduality.” While some Christians interpret St. John’s words to indicate that “the mystical experience” of Unity is an aberration, a gracious unification of the soul with God, rather than a revelation of the eternal unity of the soul and God, Vedantists take the position that the soul is always identical with God but is concealed from the awareness of this unity by the (veil of) ignorance inherent in phenomenal manifestation. The central teaching of Vedanta, and of all genuine religious teachers, is that the inner Self (*Atman*) and God (*Brahman*) are one. This is expressed in the Upanishadic dictum: *tat twam asi*, “That thou art.” It is this very knowledge, experienced in a moment of clarity in contemplation or prayer, which prompted Jesus of Nazareth to explain to his disciples who he was, and who they were, eternally:

“If you knew who *I* am, you would also know the Father. Knowing me, you know Him; seeing me, you see Him. ...

“Do you not understand that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? ... It is the Father who dwells in me doing His own work. Understand me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.”⁴⁴

There are many other nondual mystical teachings, which one can find in the utterances of Jesus, and his followers. For example, it follows from the teaching of Nonduality—that is to say, the teaching that all beings are manifestations of the one Divinity—that we should therefore treat all beings as our own Self, as they most truly are. We find this teaching very prominent among the teachings of Jesus. In his Sermon on The Mount, he says:

“Ye have heard that it has been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, love your enemies [also]; bless

them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the just and on the unjust. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”⁴⁵

This is the message of equality-consciousness, of seeing God (one’s eternal Self) in all beings, and of thinking and acting for the benefit of all. It is this kind of reformation of our minds and hearts that is called for if we are to assume our true identity and experience the perfection of our eternal Self. It is, of course, our own minds, which must be transformed so that we are capable of ridding ourselves of the false notion of a separate and distinct identity apart from the one eternal Identity. It is the mind, which must be made single, one-pointed, and eventually identified with the eternal Self.

To this end, Jesus spoke to his disciples of the necessity of releasing their minds from concerns for the welfare of their separate personalities and worldly holdings in order to lift them up to God through meditation and prayer. “How,” he asked them, “can you have your mind on God and at the same time have it occupied with the things of this world?” He pointed out to them that their hearts would be with that which they valued most. One’s attention could not be focused on God and on one’s worldly concerns at the same time, for, as he said, a city divided against itself must fall. He advised them frequently to let God be the sole focus of their attention, and to let God be the sole master whom they served. “No man can serve two masters,” he said;

“for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve both God and Mammon [the flesh]. Therefore, I say unto you: take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”⁴⁶

Naturally, this is a hard saying to those who harbor many hopes and dreams of individual worldly wealth and attainments. You’ll recall what Jesus said to the sincerely spiritual man who, nonetheless, was yet attached to his worldly wealth; “It would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle,” he said, “than for such a man to experience the kingdom of God.” The necessity for renouncing the preoccupation of the mind with worldly things if one is to occupy the mind

with thoughts of God, is a teaching that is found, not only in Vedanta and Christianity, but in all true religion. It is certainly a consistently recognized fact within the long tradition of Christian mysticism. Listen, in this regard, to the words of the 5th century Christian mystic who wrote under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite:

“While God possesses all the positive attributes of the universe, yet, in a more strict sense, he does not possess them, since He transcends them all. ⁴⁷ ... The all-perfect and unique Cause of all things transcends all, (and) is free from every limitation and beyond them all. ⁴⁸

“Therefore, do thou, in the diligent exercise of mystical contemplation, leave behind the senses and the operations of the intellect, and all things sensible and intellectual, and all things in the world of being and non-being, that thou mayest arise by unknowing towards the union, as far as is attainable, with Him who transcends all being and all knowledge. For by the unceasing and absolute renunciation of thyself and of all things, thou mayest be born on high, through pure and entire self-abnegation, into the superessential radiance of the Divine.” ⁴⁹

We are accustomed, perhaps, to associating the word, “renunciation” with the Vedantic tradition of India, and most especially as it is used in the *Bhagavad Gita*; but renunciation of the false individual self is a prerequisite to God-consciousness, regardless of one’s nationality or religious affiliation. It is a word, which occurs frequently among the writings of the great Christian mystics of the past. Listen, for example, to the 16th century Spanish monk, St. John of the Cross:

“The road and ascent to God necessarily demands a habitual effort to renounce and mortify the appetites; and the sooner this mortification is achieved, the sooner the soul reaches the summit. But until the appetites are eliminated, a person will not arrive, no matter how much virtue he practices. For he will fail to acquire perfect virtue, which lies in keeping the soul empty, naked, and purified of every appetite. ⁵⁰

“Until slumber comes to the appetites through the mortification of sensuality, and until this very sensuality is stilled in such a way that the appetites do not war against the Spirit, the soul will not walk out to genuine freedom, to the enjoyment of union with its Beloved.” ⁵¹

Now, I would like for you to hear one more Christian seer on this same theme: Thomas á Kempis was a German monk of the 15th century who, above all other

mystics, Christian or Vedantic, had a great influence upon me and many others for the beauty of his expression and the pure sincerity of his longing for God. Here is just a little of what he had to say:

“You may in no manner be satisfied with temporal goods, for you are not created to rest yourself in them. For if you alone might have all the goods that ever were created and made, you might not therefore be happy and blessed; but your blessedness and your full felicity stands only in God who has made all things. And that is not such felicity as is commended by the foolish lovers of the world, but such as good men and women hope to have in the bliss of God, and as some spiritual persons, clean and pure in heart, sometimes do taste here in this present life, whose conversation is in heaven. All worldly solace and all man’s comfort is vain and short, but that comfort is blessed and reliable that is perceived by the soul inwardly in the heart.

Await, my soul, await the promise of God, and you shall have abundance of all goodness in Him. If you inordinately covet goods present, you shall lose the Goodness eternal. Have therefore goods present in use and Goodness eternal in desire.” ⁵²

Here, again, from the same author:

“Many desire to have the gift of contemplation, but they will not use such things as are required for contemplation. And one great hindrance of contemplation is that we stand so long in outward signs and in material things and take no heed of the perfect mortifying of our body to the Spirit. I know not how it is, nor with what spirit we are led, nor what we pretend, we who are called spiritual persons, that we take greater labor and study for transitory things than we do to know the inward state of our own soul. But, alas for sorrow, as soon as we have made a little recollection to God, we run forth to outward things and do not search our own conscience with due examination, as we should, nor heed where our affection rests, nor sorrow that our deeds are so evil and so unclean as they are.” ⁵³

“... You shall much profit in grace if you keep yourself free from all temporal cares, and it shall hinder you greatly if you set value on any temporal thing. Therefore, let nothing be in your sight high, nothing great, nothing pleasing nor acceptable to you, unless it be purely God, or of God. Think all comforts vain that come to you by any creature. He who loves God, and his own soul for God, despises all other love;

for he sees well that God alone, who is eternal and incomprehensible, and fulfills all things with His goodness, is the whole solace and comfort of the soul; and that He is the very true gladness of heart, and none other but only He.⁵⁴

“This grace is a light from heaven and a spiritual gift of God. It is the proper mark and token of elect people and a guarantee of the everlasting life. It lifts a man from love of earthly things to the love of heavenly things and makes a carnal man to be a man of God. And the more that nature is oppressed and overcome, the more grace is given, and the soul through new gracious visitations is daily shaped anew and formed more and more to the image of God.”⁵⁵

Thus, as we have seen, the true religion, the true understanding, is always the same. The teachings of the saints who have known their true nature as Divine have always declared the same path of one-pointed devotion as the means to experience and become united with the Divine Self. And so, we find, in the words of the mystics of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and of the mystics of every true religious tradition, the authentic Spiritual teachings.

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16. The Mystical Tradition of Platonism (from *Body And Soul*, 2012)

The twentieth century philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, said that “all philosophy is but so many footnotes to Plato”—and it’s certainly true that Plato furnished many of the core ideas upon which all subsequent Western philosophy draws. Plato’s main teacher and predecessor, Socrates (469-399 B.C.E.), himself drawing on the Orphic and Pythagorean teachings, had apparently been disinclined to set his thoughts in writing; rather, it was his student, Plato (427-347 B.C.E.), who, by putting his master’s teachings into the form of written conversations, or dialogues, gave voice to the Spiritual philosophy that has come to be known as Platonism.

Plato established the notion of the immortality of the Spirit, or soul, and its distinction from the body, in his Dialogue, *Phaedo*, where Socrates, while awaiting execution, assures his companions that his impending departure, as a soul, from the body was not a matter for sadness or regret:

Socrates: "In this present life, I reckon that we make the nearest approach to knowledge when we have the least possible intercourse or communion with the body, and are not surfeited with the bodily nature, but keep ourselves pure until the hour when God himself is pleased to release us. And thus, having got rid of the foolishness of the body, we shall be pure and hold converse with the pure, and know of ourselves the clear light everywhere, which is no other than 'the light of truth.'

"...But, O my friend, if this be true, there is great reason to hope that, going whither I go, when I have come to the end of my journey, I shall attain that which has been the pursuit of my life. And therefore, I go on my way rejoicing, and not I only, but every other man who believes that his mind has been made ready and that he is in a manner purified."

"Certainly," replied Simmias.

"And what is purification but the separation of the soul from the body, as I was saying before; the habit of the soul gathering and collecting herself into herself from all sides out of the body; the dwelling in her own place alone, as in another life, so also in this, as far as she can; — the release of the soul from the chains of the body?"

"Very true," he said.

"...And the true philosophers, and they only, are ever seeking to release the soul. Is not the separation and release of the soul from the body their especial study?"

"That is true."

"And, as I was saying at first, there would be a ridiculous contradiction in men studying to live as nearly as they can in a state of death, and yet repining when it comes upon them." ¹

While here and there throughout the meandering Dialogues of Plato we may find sparkling jewels of mystical insight, we find nothing like a systematic metaphysics, or even a clear outline of a consistent metaphysical vision. But, more than five hundred and fifty years after the death of Plato, the great mystic-philosopher, Plotinus (205-270 C.E.), born in Lycopolis, Egypt, and transplanted to Rome, would formulate a more comprehensive metaphysics, a spiritual perspective, based, not only upon the teachings of Socrates cum Plato, but upon his own visionary experience as well. It is this mystical perspective which would ultimately be labeled by scholars as *Neoplatonism* ("the new Platonism").

In the centuries prior to Plotinus, the subject of the human experience of the Divine had always been shrouded in secrecy. In ancient Greek and Roman societies, the rare and subtle experience referred to as 'mystical experience' was regarded as belonging exclusively to the secret 'mystery' schools such as the Eleusinian, Mithraic, and Orphic mystery schools. Teachings about mysticism or mystical experience could be found only among the Adepts and initiates of those secret schools. Plotinus, living in Rome in the third century of the Current Era, repeated the ancient warning that matters relating to mystical experience were "Not to be told, not to be written." The obvious reason for this is that, in the hands of the unlearned, the uninitiated, mystical knowledge is very likely to be misinterpreted and misrepresented, and those who spoke of it ran the risk of being persecuted by the ignorant. No doubt, in those times, the example of Jesus was a strong deterrent to any mystics who might have thought of going public.

Though his own interior experience was certainly comparable to that of Jesus, Plotinus (only a couple of centuries after him) knew that he could not

openly announce his mystical experience to the commoners of Rome; rather, he spoke of his own mystical experience with only a few close students of philosophy, and his circle was very exclusive and very secret. Even to this day, only the few, the elite among spiritual seekers, are able to access, appreciate, and find joy in the great spiritual wisdom of Plotinus. And yet, it seems to me, there is so much benefit to be had by the entire society through an open sharing of spiritual knowledge by those to whom it is revealed, and so much loss accrued to the whole society without it, that I believe the benefit of sharing this knowledge greatly outweighs the risk of its corruption by the foolish. Great, liberating, knowledge is not to be hidden and relegated to whispers behind doors. The more it is shared, the more accepted it will become, and understanding will increase in even greater circles, expanding to benefit more of those who would, otherwise, suffer in the dark and lonely blindness of ignorance. It seems to me that the world has already done that for long enough!

Both Jesus and Plotinus had experienced the union of the soul with God. Jesus attempted to explain his experience in the language and context of his Judaic heritage; Plotinus attempted to explain it in the language and context of Platonist philosophy. Plotinus had experienced 'the vision of God', and, in his attempt to explain it, he formulated a metaphysics relying heavily upon the terminology of Plato that was still current at the time. However, it is not a metaphysics based *solely* on a prior metaphysics or on rational speculation, like some others, but one that is based primarily on his own unitary vision in the contemplative state, which vision he is said to have experienced on at least four occasions.

Following Plato's metaphysical lead, Plotinus describes the one Spirit as emanating or radiating itself in every direction to inhabit the subtle and manifest universe. He describes the successive realms of Spirit as three: The One, The Divine Mind (*Nous*), and Soul, in a manner analogous to the successive stages of radiation expanding from the Sun. Here are his own words:

"There exists a Principle which transcends Being; this is The One, ... Upon The One follows immediately the Principle which is at once Being and the Divine Mind. Third comes the Principle, Soul. ... Thus, our soul, too, is a divine thing, belonging to another order than sense; ²

"There is, we may say, something that is the Center; about It, a circle of light shed from It; then, around Center and first circle alike, another circle, light from light ..." ³

It must be noted that, in this representation by Plotinus, these three “principles” are not to be thought of as separate, independent entities; it is a *causal* progression only. It is the One whose creative Power is called ‘the Divine Mind’; and it is the creative Power of the One whose radiance spreads as Soul. Despite the names given to these “layers”, there is never anything but the One, and only the One, filling all.

‘The One’ represents for Plotinus the transcendent Absolute, the Unmanifest Ground. It is prior to the creative activity of the Divine Mind; and so, in the One, the universe of time and space does not even exist. The One is the absolute Void, the indescribable Godhead. It is the ultimate Identity of all. In the Vedic tradition, It is called “Brahman”, in the Taoist tradition, the “Tao,” and in the Christian writings of Meister Eckhart, “*Gottheit*”. The *active* principle, the creative Power of the One, Plotinus calls ‘The Divine Mind’ (*Nous*). And ‘Soul’ (*psyche*) is the radiation of the Divine Mind into the intelligible as well as the phenomenal universe.

Plotinus pointed out in his *Enneads* that the Absolute, who is the ultimate Source and foundation of all, cannot be described or even named accurately, since He/It is prior to all qualities, prior even to the designation of ‘Being’. Nonetheless, he names It “the One”, or he uses Plato’s previous designation, “the Good.” But he is always quick to stipulate that any descriptive name limits and qualifies the Absolute, and thereby misrepresents It:

"The All-Transcendent, utterly void of multiplicity, is Unity’s Self, independent of all else... It is the great Beginning, wholly and truly One. All life belongs to It. ⁴ ...The One is, in truth, beyond all statement; whatever you say would limit It; the All Transcendent has no name. ⁵ ... [It] is That which is the truly Existent. ... It is the Source from which all that appears to exist derives that appearance.⁶

"... Everywhere one and whole, It is at rest throughout. But, ... in Its very non-action It magnificently operates and in Its very self-being It produces everything by Its Power. ⁷

"... This Absolute is none of the things of which It is the Source; Its nature is that nothing can be affirmed of It—not existence, not essence, not life—It transcends all these. But possess yourself of It by the very elimination of [individual] being, and you hold a marvel! Thrusting forward to This, attaining, and resting in Its content, seek to grasp It more and more, understanding It by that intuitive thrust alone, but

knowing Its greatness by the beings that follow upon It and exist by Its power." ⁸

Today, we use the word "Godhead", after Meister Eckhart's *Gottheit*, to represent the Absolute, ineffable One, with the understanding that this too is merely a shorthand pointer to That which can never be conceived or expressed by the human mind. God may be directly *experienced*, but never adequately captured in thought or language. For this reason, a clear and rational comprehension or description of the One is concealed from our understanding. An ancient saying, quoted by both Plato and Saint Paul, reminds us that "We see now but vaguely, as through a darkened glass; but then (meaning: when we have direct *vision* of God) we shall see as though face to face."

While the One cannot be described or clearly comprehended by the intellect, nonetheless, we can get a sense of It by analogy with our own nature, since we are made in Its image. Like the eternal Consciousness, our own individual consciousness is one and unchanging, while the energetic outpouring of thought is multiple and subject to flux. Our thoughts are contained as potentiality in our own consciousness which is their substratum and source, and yet these thoughts, even when given expression, do not in any way affect that consciousness, any more than clouds passing through the sky alters or affects the sky. This, I believe, is analogous to the unity of the One and Its Creative Power; for while the One remains transcendent, unaltered, and unaffected, Its energetic outpouring of creativity continues apace.

And so, we are able to recognize these two aspects of our own minds as in some way comparable to the two aspects of God: The One (the pure Absolute), and His Creative Power. They are not two separate entities, of course, any more than those two aspects of our own minds are separated. They are one, yet they have a semblance of duality, since one is causally primary to the other, just as, while the Sun and the light it radiates are one, the Sun is primary to its radiance.

"The Divine Mind is the first Act of The One and the first Existence; The One remains stationary within Itself, but the Divine Mind acts in relation to It and, as it were, lives about It. And the Soul, outside, circles around the Divine Mind, and by gazing upon it, seeing into the depths of it, through it sees God." ⁹

According to Plotinus, we may think of Soul as a spreading Field radiating from the Divine Mind. It is the outspreading light of Divine Intelligence, the invisible radiation of the Divine Consciousness, that manifests as the intelligible (spiritual)

world. Soul is one undivided radiance, and though it contains souls, they are as yet unmanifest, undifferentiated. We must remember that, for Plotinus, Soul does not consist of an ethereal substance; it is a projection of the conscious intelligence of the Divine Mind.

Unlike the conception of Moses, in which God's Spirit, or Soul, had been imparted to man alone, Plotinus regarded Soul as a radiation of God's Spirit imparted to the entire universe, permeating and residing in every existent form. Here is Plotinus' vision of this Divine Soul emanation in his own words:

"Let every soul recall, then, at the outset the truth that soul is the author of all living things, that it has breathed the life into them all, whatever is nourished by earth and sea, all the creatures of the air, the divine stars in the sky; it is the maker of the sun; itself formed and ordered this vast heaven and conducts all that rhythmic motion; and it is a principle distinct from all these to which it gives law and movement and life, and it must of necessity be more honorable than they, for they gather or dissolve as soul brings them life or abandons them, but soul, since it never can abandon itself, is of eternal being.

"How life was purveyed to the universe of things and to the separate beings in it may be thus conceived:

"...Let not merely the enveloping body be at peace, body's turmoils stilled, but all that lies around, earth at peace, and sea at peace, and air and the very heavens. Into that heaven, all at rest, let the great Soul be conceived to roll inward at every point, penetrating, permeating, from all sides pouring in its light. As the rays of the sun throwing their brilliance upon a lowering cloud make it gleam all gold, so the Soul entering the material expanse of the heavens has given life, has given immortality. What was abject it has lifted up; and the heavenly system, moved now in endless motion by the Soul that leads it in wisdom, has become a living and a blessed thing. The Soul domiciled within, it takes worth where, before the Soul, it was stark body—clay and water—or, rather, the blankness of Matter, the absence of Being...

"The Soul's nature and power will be brought out more clearly, more brilliantly, if we consider how it envelops the heavenly system and guides all to its purposes: for it has bestowed itself upon all that huge expanse so that every interval, small and great alike, all has been ensouled.

"...By the power of the Soul the manifold and diverse heavenly system is a unit; through Soul this universe is a god. And the sun is a god because it is ensouled; so too the stars; and whatsoever we ourselves may be, it is all in virtue of Soul...

"This, by which the gods are divine, must be the oldest God of them all: and our own soul is of that same Ideal nature, so that to consider it, purified, freed from all accrument, is to recognize in ourselves that same value which we have found Soul to be, honorable above all that is bodily." ¹⁰

For us, the most obvious manifestation of God's Spirit, or Soul, is our very life and consciousness; but if Plotinus is correct—that Soul is the guiding Intelligence in all of creation—then Spirit, or Soul, must be regarded as a presence informing the very evolution of matter and the cosmos from the Beginning. For Plotinus, Soul is the intelligent organizing principle that impresses its order upon all the matter in the universe. In the language of contemporary knowledge, we would say that Soul is the all-pervading Intelligence that coalesces wave-particles into structures such as atoms, molecules, cells; and organizes them into microbiological structures such as amoeba and bacteria, into photosynthesizing vegetation and aquatic creatures, becoming the very life-pulse of all that lives and moves. Matter alone has no abilities such as these; it is Soul that permeates the expanding heavens and earth, bringing living organization into matter and enabling replication and evolutionary change. Soul is the guiding intelligence, the evolutionary force, and the breath of Life permeating all the universe.

The organizing influence of Soul in the structuring of the material universe, on either the microcosmic or macrocosmic level, is not empirically evident; but cumulatively, the various "fine-tuned" developments in the ordering of the simplest atoms to the grandest galaxies leads us to discern a purposeful intelligence at work that has been recognized even by hardened empiricists, who have dubbed it "the anthropic principle". This principle derives from the increasing recognition on the part of scientific observers that nature appears from the beginning, at every step, and in countless ways, to be teleologically structured with an innate intention toward the emergence of human life-forms. May we not accept this principle as evidence of the presence of an invisible guiding intelligence such as that Plotinus labeled "Soul"?

We may also wonder if Soul, the all-pervading Intelligence of God, is, indeed, the "unified force" responsible for the manifestation of the weak, strong, electromagnetic, and gravitational forces, binding the elements of this universe together. Could it also explain the phenomenon of quantum interconnectedness

known as ‘quantum entanglement’, which requires a medium of transmission allowing for the instantaneous relaying of information? Mightn’t this currently unexplained phenomenon also be attributable to an all-pervading consciousness extending throughout the universe, such as that Plotinus refers to as ‘Soul’?

An all-pervading consciousness permeating all the universe may be difficult to recognize in what we regard as *inert* matter, but what of living forms? A mother’s ovum becomes impregnated by the father’s sperm, and a single cell is formed in her uterus. The cell divides and divides again and again. Some of the cells become eyes; others become fingers; others become brain cells, others blood or ears. Who tells each cell what it is to become? How does it know where to go, and what form it is to take? Biologists haven’t a clue. Perhaps it is an invisible intelligence that operates within each cell of the nascent embryo to direct and guide its formation—something akin to what we’ve described as an all-pervasive Soul.

And if that conscious Soul lives throughout the universe, in the billions of galaxies, and in the countless stars and planets, then our own soul is connected to and part of that universal Soul. No doubt, it will one day be universally understood that the archetypal energies and angular relationships of the proximate heavenly bodies do indeed correspond meaningfully to the physical and psychical activities of humanity on earth through the medium of an all-pervasive Soul. Such correspondences do not operate by any law of physics, but by a universal sympathy too subtle for physical measurement. There have always been a few who have been aware of and understood these meaningful correspondences, but the universal comprehension of their full significance we must leave to future generations.

What is currently apparent to most of us, however, is that Soul is the life-force that transforms inert matter into living, breathing entities; and that Soul is the conscious intelligence that stirs the minds of men, acting as an evolutionary force to lead them to the knowledge of their true source and being, their own all-pervading Divine Self. This pervasion of the material universe by Soul is at the foundation of Plotinus’ metaphysical vision. In his vision, Soul, emanated from the Divine Mind, has no physical parameters; It does not consist of mass or energy; It is not a substance that extends as a radiation into space. It is entirely beyond comparison with physical spatio-temporal phenomena. And yet, because our language is grounded in phenomenal temporality, and we have only these language tools in use when attempting to convey the concept of a noumenal Soul, we are often at a loss to even formulate a clear conception of Soul.

One might reasonably ask, “Is it even necessary for God to extend throughout space as Soul in order to manifest in bodies? Isn’t He already all-pervasive, and

inherent in everything that exists?” And the answer is “Yes, He is all-pervasive throughout the universe—and it is just this all-pervasiveness of God that we call ‘Soul’”.

Unfortunately, however, “Soul” is a word that carries with it some negative overtones for many of us. To many, it suggests a distinct personal entity; or we may be reminded of the misty imaginings conjured up during the religious instructions of our childhood. It is a word that has dwindled from our modern vocabulary due to such associations, and due also to its seeming vagueness. But let us understand “Soul”, as Plotinus did, as a term intended to represent the ineffable Intelligence that wafts from the Divine Mind, pervading everything, invisibly present in every place, enlivening every life-form, imbuing us with vitality, consciousness and intelligence; and constituting the medium connecting us to God. Soul is invisible and immaterial; it cannot even be conceived of or imagined, and yet it is impossible to deny that such a Divine principle exists, and operates, and rules over all. It is in fact the one Consciousness in which the universe and all its contents resides. And so, if we must represent this Divine universal presence with a word, let us agree to call it “Soul.”

Soul pervades, and it is the universe of time, space and form that is pervaded; and that too is His production. But, unlike Soul, which is the eternal radiance of God’s very Consciousness and Being, the material universe is made of a transient form-producing burst of Divine Energy.

So, we must see that, in Plotinus’ vision, as well as that of the Judaic scriptures, it is not the material form that constitutes our true and eternal identity, but it is, rather, our Divine soul that is our eternal source of life and joy, and is indeed a ray of the one eternal Consciousness, and the link by which we are connected to the one eternal Self, by which we may, with His grace, ascend to the knowledge of our identity with that highest Divinity.

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17. The Mystical Tradition of Islam (from *History of Mysticism*, the chapter on The Sufis, 1987)

The religion of Islam was founded in Arabia by Muhammed (d. 632), whose book, the *Quran* or *Koran*, constitutes the final authority and credo for all who claim Islam as their religion. Though Muhammed claimed that the book was inspired by God, whom he calls *Allah*, it contains much that is derived from ancient Jewish and Christian sources. Muhammed set forth in the *Quran*, by the use of many anecdotes and commentaries, a number of moral precepts and social laws, which did much in the 7th century to transform a diversified group of lawless nomadic tribes into a united God-fearing nation. And while the *Quran* is essentially a book of moral principle and faith, it contains many statements by Muhammed which may be interpreted as mystical in nature.

Following upon the death of Muhammed, a number of devout mystics belonging to the Islamic faith appeared throughout the Middle East, spreading from Arabia to Egypt, Iraq, Persia, Turkey, and Afghanistan. They came to be known as *Sufis*, from the word for “wool”—apparently because of the woolen garments worn by these gnostics to set them apart as “knowers” of God. While the mainstream faithful of Islam were busily engaged in the spread of their religion through territorial conquest during the 8th and 9th centuries, the Sufis were teaching the pure love of God, and living an ascetic life aimed at realizing Him in the depths of their souls.

Among the best known and revered of these early Sufis were Hasan al-Basri (d. 728), Rabi’a Adawiyya, the slave-girl of Basra (d. 801), Dhu’n-Nun, the Egyptian (d. 859), Beyizid Bistami, the Persian (d. 874), and Abu’l-Husayn an-Nuri, the Iraqi (d. 907). All were great lovers of God, and each of them greatly influenced the mystical mood of their time. Their love of God took the form of a one-pointed yearning for union with Him, for the “vision of His Face”; and their writings often

resembled the arduous outpourings of a lover to his beloved.

For the Sufis, the path of love is the Way by which the soul makes the involute journey to the awareness of her own true identity. And the prayerful songs of love sung by the Sufis are the expressions of the soul's yearning to return in awareness to her eternal Source and Ground. She searches inwardly for her pristine state, her Beloved, her Lord; and subdues herself, dissolving herself, as it were, by reducing her own being to her pristine simplicity and ultimate non-being. She renounces all regard for herself, divests herself of all fascination with manifested phenomena, both inner and outer; and, drawn by a one-pointed love and desire for God, is brought at last to silence. Then the illusory duality of soul and God is no more; the awareness of the one Self dawns with supreme clarity, knowing who It has always been, knowing Its eternal freedom and joy.

Such a description of the soul's inner "pilgrimage" makes it appear a simple and clear-cut process, but it is the most difficult accomplishment that can be performed, for the ego-soul does not die without a fight. It wages a tireless and bitter warfare against its own attraction to God, and fights with all the fury and panic of a drowning man struggling to sustain his existence; it incessantly asserts its love of the manifested world and life, and restlessly strives to create a diversion from its path toward God. Torn in two directions, the soul suffers, on the one hand, the agonies of annihilation, and on the other, the painful prolonging of its failure to reach its avowed Goal. Only when it comes at last, by the grace of God, to that point where it surrenders all other objectives for God alone does it become capable of reaching its cherished Goal; divinely inspired by the desire for God alone, it makes that leap into the consciousness of universal Being.

In the writings of the early Sufis, and in particular, those of Dhu'n-Nun, this path of divine love for God, culminating in vision, or *gnosis*, is charted as a path (*tariq*) marked by several distinct advances, or stations. The entering upon the path originates with a call from God and the assent of the individual will to embark on the journey. This "call" is an awakening of the heart, which is affected solely by God's grace, serving to draw the wandering soul back to its true home and divine source. This awakening might be precipitated by the meeting with a *Shaikh* (spiritual Master), or through a reading of the words of one of the mystics who had traveled the path of divine love and reached its goal.

The actual journey along the spiritual path begins with the station of Repentance (*tauba*). "Repentance," said Jalaluddin Rumi, "is a strange mount; it jumps toward heaven in a single moment from the lowest place." A man may have led an utterly

despicable life prior to the awakening of the soul, but once that awakening takes place, he immediately wipes clean the entire slate of the past, and utterly transforms his own mind and will by the intense remorse he feels for all the little acts of wicked selfishness performed theretofore. He is filled with shame and regret for every instance of hurt given to another, because his heart is now filled with pity and love for all humanity struggling to find the joy and understanding he has now found through God's grace. Such remembrance of one's own stupidity in the previous state of ignorance is also a great humbler of what pride one might otherwise be tempted to feel in the possession of that grace.

The next station is that of Faith or Surrender To God (*tawakkul*). The mental agitation resulting from fear for one's own welfare, which may afflict the novice when he chooses to give all his thought to God, is dispelled by the calm remembrance that it is He who has called the soul to Him, and that He will nourish and provide for the body as well. Surrendering all thoughts of his own bodily welfare, he gives everything into the hands of God, and says, "Lead me wheresoever Thou wilt." This attitude was expressed by Jesus to his disciples when he told them to take no thought for the morrow: "Do not worry and say, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we wear?' Your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things. Seek first His kingdom and all these things shall be given to you." This may lead to Poverty (*faqr*), and often does; but if this poverty is necessary to the freedom to contemplate God, so be it. To those who have been thus led to it, this poverty is the true and greatest wealth.

The next station is that of Patient Endurance (*sabr*), a great necessity for the soul called to the contemplation of God. Calm acceptance of the rigors of such a life is necessary to the stability of the soul, which must pass through many ordeals, and many temptations that arise in the mind. Next, and allied with Patient Endurance, is Joy In Affliction (*rida*). When the soul is free to focus its attention on God, it enjoys an inner bliss, which cannot be dislodged by any outward occurrence, no matter how unpleasant. Its joy is derived from a source entirely untouched by worldly pains or pleasures, and therefore the soul remains unaffected by them, reveling solely in the proximity of the Beloved. The soul, burdened by afflictions, has only to remember God to rise above all earthly pain, and know the healing caress of imperturbable bliss.

However, following that sweet time, comes another, often referred to as "The Dark Night Of The Soul"; the Sufis call it *gabd*. This is a state of dryness and emptiness, when the soul, struggling to become completely selfless, egoless, has not yet reached the ultimate degree of extinction, and suffers the heavy sense of

death, with no light of superconscious life yet visible. It is a dry, awful, sense of one's own nothingness, one's own emptiness, which may be likened to the darkness experienced while going through a dark tunnel when the light at the other end cannot yet be seen. The ego-self is withered, dried-up, and all but gone; but the greater Selfhood has not yet revealed Itself. The suffering soul feels great agony in the lack of both worldly and spiritual consolation; and worse, it imagines that it has been damned and relegated forever to its present hell, and thus suffers all the more.

Then comes the revelation of Love and Spiritual Knowledge (*mahabba* and *ma'rifa*). The soul awakens to an incredibly clear awareness that embraces both divine Love and Knowledge. It is an inner realization by the soul that the God it sought is all-inclusive Love, and the soul experiences that Love within itself. It knows that This is the sustaining Power and guide of all its life. And it vows to surrender all else for the sake of being filled throughout life with this perfect Love. With great joy, the soul is refreshed, and sings: "Thou art my God, the sole Father of my being, the sweet breath of Love that lives in my heart; and I shall follow Thee, and live with Thee, and lean on Thee till the end of my days."

This experience of divine Love may be likened to the corona of the Sun; it is fully Light, yet it has a still deeper Source. And this Love, while fully complete, yet yearns for its own source, its own center of radiance; and so, while this Love is the fulfilling Light itself, it is drawn by longing to Itself. Says Rumi: "The hearts of the wise are the nests of love, and the hearts of the lovers are the nests of longing, and the hearts of the longing are the nests of intimacy." The longing of the lover for God is often compared to that of a worldly lover for her beloved. The soul so blessed, or afflicted, with divine Love has no other thought or desire but to reach her Beloved. She weeps sweet tears of love nightly and calls in her heart for death at her Beloved's feet. Like a moth drawn to a flame, she longs to be annihilated in her Beloved's embrace, and so to enjoy the ultimate intimacy of union with her beloved God.

It is this love-longing which leads to the station of Annihilation (*fana*). This is the profoundly transformative experience referred to in other traditions as *nirvana*, *samadhi*, or "the vision of God." For, at the moment the ego is extinguished, the eternal and all-pervasive "I" is realized. It is an experience that overturns all previous conceptions of God and the soul. Previously, there was a relationship: of the soul to God, the lover to the Beloved; but now, the ego-soul is no more. The false sense of selfhood, which is part of the illusion of phenomenal existence, has been erased, and only the Real, the One, exists. What shall we call It? The

Dharmakaya of the Buddhists? The *Atman* of the Vedantists? The “One” of Plotinus? The Sufis call It *Haqq*, “the Real.”

Scholars may imagine that a Buddhist experiences one thing, a Vedantist another, and so forth; but one who has experienced It, whether a Sufi, Christian or Hindu, knows that It is the final Truth, the only One. There are not different Unities, one for each sect or denomination; there is only one One, and it is That which is experienced by Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and Sufis alike. It should be obvious that, if there is such a thing as Unity, and if It can be experienced, then the experience must be the same for all; since Unity, by its very definition, by its very nature, is one. So what, if that One is called by different names in different lands! In every place and in every generation, new terms are ever being invented in the hope of elucidating the knowledge of Unity.

All phenomenal existence comes into being by the power of that One. This makes an apparent two; but it is really only one. The appearance of two is just the result of the “imaginary” juxtaposition of subject and object. But, of course, the subject and the object are the same One. It is this Unity that is realized when the soul reaches the station of *fana*. When the ego-mind is dissolved, having been drawn to its extinction by its own Source, there is no longer a subject-object relationship. There is only the Unnamable, beyond all subject-object predications. It is what has been called by the Sufis, *jam*, or “Unity.”

The Upanishadic seers of this Unity declared that, “When one realizes Brahman, he becomes Brahman.” “When I died to myself,” says the Sufi, “I became the Beloved.” “I have ceased to exist, and have passed out of self,” said Rabi’a; “I am one with Him and entirely His.” It is from the standpoint of this experience of Unity that al-Hallaj declared, *ana’l Haqq*, “I am He”; and Bistami exclaimed, “Glory be to Me! There is nothing under my garment but He.” For, after such a revelation, if one is to speak the truth, he can no longer make a distinction between “me” and “Thee.” He knows full well that there is no other in all the universe but that one “I.” If he makes the slightest separation between “I” and “Thou,” he has forfeited the Truth, and re-established Duality. How strange and baffling, that only moments before, he was a soul on fire with love; and now he is enjoined by the Truth revealed to him to forget about souls and desire for union.

One might imagine this experience of *fana* to be the final station on the Sufi path, but, in Sufism, as in nearly every mystical tradition, there is recognized to be a further, final, station on the journey to perfection. This ultimate summit of spiritual attainment is called Retention of Identity (*baqa*). This is the state of one

living continuously in the enlightened awareness of Unity. It is the state of the *jivanmukta* of Vedanta; the state of Buddhahood of the Buddhists; the Beatitude of the Christians; the Sagehood of the Taoists. *Baqa*, the final and ultimate station, is nothing less than the continuous retention of the awareness of Unity throughout one's life; in every moment and breath, to live in the awareness of one's true, all pervasive, Identity. This is the perfect life of freedom, contentment, and utter surrender of the soul to the will of God within.

We find this state of perfection described by the Taoist, Lao Tze, by the *Bhagavad Gita*, by the Avadhut, by the Christians, Zen Buddhists, and all the enlightened saints of all time; yet all have declared as well that this state is beyond description. "The Way that can be told is not the true Way," said Lao Tze; it would make no sense at all to those unprepared for it by inner experience, and besides, no words can tell just what the life of such a man is like. It must be lived to know it. Such a man may teach, or he may not teach; he may beg for his food or he may labor for it; he may be fat or he may be thin; he may write books or he may appear a simpleton; but the joy is the same. He may be a Sufi or a Jew; he may be a Buddhist or an Avadhut, a Christian or a Sikh, a farmer or a monk; but the joy is the same.

Naturally, it is very difficult for people at a lower station of knowledge to recognize or appreciate the view of one at the highest station, and it is because of this that the unilluminated so often deride and persecute the saints. On the other hand, one who has reached the final state cannot malign the preliminary stations as incorrect; for it was by the ascension of the path, by way of these very stations, that he arrived at his Goal. Once there, he sees that all the people of the world are at the station on the path to which they have individually arrived by God's Grace. How can he fault their ignorance? If anyone at all can understand him or even hear his voice, it is those at the stations most near to him. The great majority of men are far below him and must imagine him to be a madman. As Lao Tze has said, "If it were not the highest Truth, it would not be laughed at by the majority of people."

Within Islam, as within all religious traditions, there are individuals of varying degrees of spiritual experience and understanding, with the mystic standing at the highest degree, opposed at the other end of the scale by those pious and pretentious people whose understanding of spiritual experience is dim. These two contrary elements within any religious tradition tend naturally to conflict mightily with one another; and, in Islam, as elsewhere, this conflict has often resulted in the extreme persecution and martyrdom of the mystics.

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18. The Mystical Tradition of Vedanta (from *Body And Soul*, 2012)

The mystical experience of one's eternal and all-pervasive identity undoubtedly occurs to people of both East and West; and, while the question of whether it was the East or the West, India or Greece, that served as the birthplace of a mystically-based metaphysics is an intriguing one, it is a question which will probably never be resolved. It is my belief that the similarities between the metaphysics of Eastern mystics and Western mystics is due to the commonalities of the mystical experience itself rather than any philosophical interchange between East and West; but there was no doubt some opportunity for such interchange to occur in the remote past, and this contact should be acknowledged.

There are records of commercial trade between India and Mesopotamia from around the 15th century B.C.E., and between India and Greece going back to the 10th century B.C.E. The teachings of the early Upanishads presumably reached Greece around the 6th century B.C.E., during the time when both countries were part of the Persian empire and enjoyed increased commerce with each other. There were no manuscript translations of Sanskrit works at that time that we know of;¹ and so any religious or philosophical ideas would have to have been shared verbally between traveling religious scholars, probably with the mediation of an interpreter. That would certainly lessen the possibility of a detailed transmission of metaphysical ideas; nonetheless, the possibility exists of an Indian influence upon the earliest Greek philosophers such as Thales (624-545 B.C.E.), Pythagorus (572-512 B.C.E.), Xenophanes (570-470 B.C.E.), Parmenides (540-480 B.C.E.), etc., who in turn had great influence upon later Greek philosophers such as Socrates and Plato.²

There was much mutual interchange between East and West thereafter, and the philosophies of Plato (427-347 B.C.E.) and later Plotinus (205-270 C.E.) no doubt quickly traveled eastward and wielded their own influence upon the shores of India as well as around the world. Buddhist texts did not surface until around the fourth century C.E.—a century to a century and a half after the time of Plotinus—and so had no influence during the classic Hellenist or Neoplatonist period.

We must remember, when discussing the early mystical philosophies, that most of the important scientific discoveries about our universe, our world, and our place in it, have occurred only in the last few recent centuries; and that mystics and philosophers of the time of the *Upanishads*, or of Plato and Plotinus, and even of Shankaracharya (b. ca. 686 C.E.), lived in a relatively Dark Age, when knowledge of the nature of the phenomenal world was extremely rudimentary. These

philosophers viewed the visible universe as an endless series of concentric shells in the manner described by Aristotle; the Sun revolved around a flat earth; the sublunar spaces were filled with demons and angels; the heavenly bodies revolved on the inner surface of an earth-surrounding globe; the physical body was composed of the five elements (including aether); life was generated by decay; and no one guessed that the universe was expanding, or imagined that energy and mass were interconvertible, or could even dream of biological evolution. But some things were the same as they are now: the differences between mind and matter were just as apparent as they are today; and life and death still had the same dissimilar characteristics.

The existence of an individual life-force or soul that animated material bodies was no doubt inferred by early *homo sapiens*, and quickly became one of the most evident of realities among the people of early civilizations. This belief in the existence of souls began thereafter to play a prominent role in the philosophies of advanced minds everywhere. And it seemed reasonable to some to assume that a previously existent soul could be reincarnated in a newly-born body. This concept, of the transmigration or reincarnation of souls, appears early on in both the philosophies of the East and of the West, but it is not certain where it originated. Herodotus thought it may have originated in pre-dynastic Egypt. In any case, reincarnation forms an integral part of the early *Upanishads* (1000-800 B.C.E.), and the *Bhagavad Gita* (ca. 500 B.C.E.) of India, where it was and is regarded as a process of experience-gathering toward the purification and eventual liberation of the soul.

This idea appears also in Greece in the Orphic tradition (7th and 6th century B.C.E.), and was thereafter adopted by Pythagorus, and later Plato. The notion of reincarnation, and the eventual liberation of the soul, was already common in Greece by the time of Plato, and in Plato's Dialogue, *Phaedo*, Socrates was depicted affirmatively discussing this notion with his friends on the night of his execution. Centuries later, Plotinus took up the reincarnation idea as a central doctrine of his own Plato-inspired metaphysics. It was an idea that was widely accepted in the East, Near-East, and West alike during those early years. There is evidence that it was an accepted doctrine of esoteric Judaism as well, most particularly in the Essene sect, and that it was acknowledged as a reality by Jesus and members of the early Church, most notably by the Alexandrian theologian, Origen (182-251 C.E.); but the doctrine ceased to have a position in Christian theology when it was declared anathema to faithful Christians at the Fifth General Council convened by emperor Justinian in 553 C.E.

In the earlier Upanishads, connected by lineage to the more archaic Vedas, Aranyakas, and Brahmanas, the nature of the individual soul was seldom mentioned, and rarely well-defined. The Upanishads are among the earliest recorded utterances of men who had experienced the Eternal as their own essential identity, but they do not comprise a consistent homogeneous system of thought; rather they are individual treatises by individual authors, often separated widely by time and place of origin, as well as by individual idiosyncrasies. In one of the later Upanishads, the *Maitri Upanishad*, the narrator, Prajapati, after a lengthy explanation of the Divine Self (*atman*), acknowledges briefly the existence of the individual soul (*jiva*):

"Yes, there is indeed a soul, composed of the elements, who is bound by the good or bad effects of actions, and who, born again from these good or bad effects, rises or falls in its wanderings under the sway of duality. This human soul is under the power of Nature (*Prakrti*) and its conditions, and thus it falls into confusion. Because of this confusion, the soul cannot become conscious of the God who dwells within, and whose power gives us the power to act. The soul is thus whirled along the rushing, muddy, stream of Nature, and becomes unsteady and uncertain. It is filled with confusion and full of desires, without concentration, and agitated with pride. Whenever the soul has thoughts of "I" and "mine," it binds itself to a limited sense of selfhood, a limited identity, just as a bird is bound in the net of a snare." ³

In this Upanishad, the "soul" or *jiva*, is described as "composed of the [material] elements"; it is regarded as an illusory identity obscuring the true identity, which is the Divine Self (*Atman*). There is little in this Upanishad, however, to metaphysically link the soul to Brahman or to provide a real sense of its nature. For that, we must turn to the *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, where a more unified and carefully thought-out picture is presented:

I sing of Brahman: the subject, the object, the Lord of all! He's the immutable Foundation of all that exists; those souls who realize Him as their very own Self are freed forever from the need for rebirth.

"The Lord is the Foundation of both aspects of reality: He is both the Imperishable and the perishable, the Cause and the effect. He takes the form of the limited soul, appearing to be bound; but, in fact, He is forever free.

"Brahman appears as Creator, and also as the limited soul; He is also the Power that creates the appearance of the world. Yet He remains

unlimited and unaffected by these appearances; when one knows that Brahman, then that soul becomes free.⁴

"... Within the Cycle [of existence], in which all live and seek rest, the swan-like soul wanders restlessly; it thinks it's separate and far from God, but, by His Grace, it awakes to its identity with Him.⁵

"When that Lord, who pervades all the worlds everywhere, gave birth to the first motion, He manifested Himself as creation. It's He alone who is born in this world. He lives in all beings; it's only Him everywhere.

"... Those who have known Him say that, while He manifests all worlds by His Power, He remains ever One and unchanged. He lives as the one Self of everyone; He's the Creator and Protector to whom all beings return.⁶

Clearly, Svetasvatara's vision is identical in all respects to the revised metaphysics of Plotinus, upon which we have just elaborated. That same metaphysical vision of Plotinus, as currently revised, is also identical to that of the *Bhagavad Gita*, if we allow for the differences in language and terminology.

The author of the *Bhagavad Gita* alternated his terminology between that of Kapila (ca. 800 B.C.E.), and that of the Vedas. The Sankhya system of Kapila named the transcendent Spirit as *Purusha*, and Its Creative Power to manifest the material universe as *Prakriti*; and this terminology is used throughout the *Gita*. But the author also uses the Vedic terminology, which most commonly regards what Plotinus calls "the One" as *Nirguna Brahman* (*Brahman* without [*nir*] qualities [*guna*]). What Plotinus refers to as "The Divine Mind" is called *Saguna Brahman* (*Brahman* with [*sa*] qualities). *Nirguna Brahman* is referred to throughout the *Gita* simply as *Brahman*; *Saguna Brahman* is personalized as *Brahma* or *Ishvara* (Lord). And it is *Saguna Brahman*, or *Brahma*, who weilds the veiling power of *Maya*, or illusion. The relationship between "The One" and "The Divine Mind" as explained by Plotinus is identical with that of *Brahman* and *Brahma* in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Here, for comparison, is a listing of the terms used in the *Bhagavad Gita* and those used by Plotinus:

Bhagavad Gita*Brahman, Purusha**Brahma (Maya), Prakriti**Atman**Jiva***Plotinus**The One (*to Hen*)The Divine Mind (*Nous*)Soul (*psyche*)

The individualized soul

The *Bhagavad Gita* (Song of God) was written ca. 500 B.C.E., as part of a larger work, the *Mahabharata*, (reputedly by the legendary sage, Vyasa), as a dialogue between Krishna (an incarnation of God) and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. And it is Krishna who, speaking as the Divinity itself, teaches to Arjuna the perennial philosophy, explaining that in His Divine unmanifest state He brings forth the entire universe, which he describes as his 'lower' nature;⁷ and He manifests this 'lower nature', the material universe, in a cyclic fashion, periodically creating, then dissolving it:

"At the end of a cycle, all beings, O son of Kunti, enter into My *Prakriti* [His creative Power], and at the beginning of a cycle, I generate them all again. Controlling My own *Prakriti*, I send forth, again and again, all this multitude of beings, helpless under the sway of Maya." ⁸

But, as He tells Arjuna, He contains a 'higher nature' that is not subject to this cyclic manifestation:

"But different from it, know, O mighty Arjuna, My higher nature—the Indwelling Spirit by which the universe is sustained.⁹ ...By Me, in my unmanifest form, are all things in this universe pervaded." ¹⁰

Pervading the material universe, He (*Brahman*) is the invisible Spirit, or soul, in all:

"The Lord (Krishna) said: Brahman is the Imperishable, the Supreme. Dwelling in each body, Brahman is called the individual soul." ¹¹

This soul, says Krishna, "is indivisible, and yet It is, as it were divided among beings."¹²

"It is never born, nor does It ever die, nor, having once been, does It again cease to be. Unborn, eternal, permanent, and primeval, It is not slain when the body is slain. Only the bodies, of which this eternal, imperishable, incomprehensible Self is the indweller, are said to have

an end. That by which all this is pervaded know to be imperishable. None can cause the destruction of That which is immutable."¹³

He goes on to explain to Arjuna that this indestructible soul or Self is not limited to one embodiment only:

"Even as the embodied Self passes, in this body, through the stages of childhood, youth, and old age, so does it pass into another body. Even as a person casts off worn-out clothes and puts on others that are new, so the embodied Self casts off worn-out bodies and enters into others that are new."¹⁴

So, as I'm sure the reader can easily see, there are many remarkable parallels between the (revised) metaphysical vision of Plotinus and that of the *Bhagavad Gita*. These parallels arise from the fact that both Vyasa and Plotinus had directly experienced these truths in their visionary revelations, as have innumerable other souls. We must not forget, however, that Plotinus must certainly have had some introduction to the Indian metaphysics through his guru, Ammonius, who was said to be conversant with both the Persian and Indian metaphysics.

Much later, the illustrious teacher (*acharya*), Shankara (eighth century C.E.), attempted a reformulation of *Advaita* (Nondual) Vedanta, and in the process, introduced some ideas which are controversial to this day. In many ways, his metaphysical worldview is also remarkably similar to that of Plotinus: Like Plotinus, Shankaracharya regarded the Soul or Self as identical with the Divine. He asserts that, in man, the Self (*Atman*) is the witness to the various activities of the mind, residing in stillness, unaltered and unaffected by either the form or content of one's mental activity; and that this Self is *identical* to Brahman, the One, the Absolute. Here, for reference, is a comparison of the terms used by each:

Shankaracharya

Parabrahman or simply *Brahman*

Brahma or *Ishvara*

Atman

Jivataman or simply *jiva*

Jagat

Plotinus

The One (*To hen*)

The Divine Mind (*Nous*)

Soul (*psyche*)

Individualized soul

The material world

But what do we mean when we say that the Self of man is identical to Brahman? If Brahman is present in every human being, by what means does He appear as their innermost Self? God is one; the beings are many: by what means does He spread Himself out in this way while remaining one? Plato and Plotinus postulated

an all-pervading radiation of the Divine Consciousness throughout the material universe, which they called "Soul". It is by means of this pervading Divine Consciousness, says Plotinus, that God is present as the Self of everyone. Shankaracharya offers no such explanation; in fact, for him, there is no universe to be pervaded. There is only *Brahman/Atman*; and the universe is but a projected illusion existing only in the consciousness of the *jiva* (which is really the *Atman*).

Nevertheless, he concedes that, from a relative point of view, *Brahman/Atman* is omnipresent as the absolute Consciousness that is the substratum of the universe and the inner Self of man, falsely appearing as the soul or *jiva*. He explains that it is due to *Brahma's* power of *Maya* that one *appears* to be an individualized soul; but this soul is actually *Atman*, the Divine Self, and can be realized as such. Here, using the same light-radiation metaphor as Plotinus, Shankara explains the identity of the individual soul and the Divine Self (*Atman/Brahman*):

"The transmigrating soul is not different from the Lord. ...Just as the light of the Sun and the Sun itself are not absolutely different, so also the soul and the supreme Self are not different.

"...Because all souls are essentially non-different, and their apparent difference is due to ignorance (*avidya*) only, the individual soul, after having dispelled ignorance by true knowledge, passes into Unity with the supreme Self.¹⁵

"The Self...can be directly realized as pure Consciousness and infinite Bliss. Its appearance as an individual soul is caused by the delusion of our understanding and has no reality. By its very nature, this appearance is unreal. When our delusion has been removed, it [the individualized soul] ceases to exist." ¹⁶

However, it is when Shankara explains the illusory nature of the universe that interpretive difficulties arise. The *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita* hold that Brahman possesses a creative Power, called *Maya*, by which He creates or projects, an objective universe of visible objects. Passages from certain of the works attributed to Shankara, such as the following from his *Atma Bodha*, would lead one to believe that he held a similar position:

"Visible objects, like the body, mind, etc., are born of the primal Energy (*Shakti*) and the ignorance (*avidya*) attending it and are evanescent like bubbles. One should realize the pure, eternal Self, which is other than these, and know, "I am Brahman (*aham brahmasmi*). " ¹⁷

But Shankara (whose empirical understanding of the physical nature of the universe was as flawed as that of Plotinus) clearly believed that the world was never actually created; that it is merely a “projection” (*adhyasa*) upon Brahman produced by the individual soul or mind, due to an ignorance (*avidya*) divinely inherent in it. From his considerable body of works, it is apparent that Shankara believed that we “project” or “superimpose” an imagined world upon Brahman, as one “projects” a mirage upon the desert, or an imaginary snake upon a rope. This is known as ‘the doctrine of superimposition’ (*vivartavada*). Here is Shankara’s explanation of this idea:

"The universe does not exist apart from the Self (*Atman*). Our perception of it as having an independent existence is false, like our perception of blueness in the sky. How can a superimposed attribute have any existence, apart from its substratum? It is only our delusion which causes this misconception of the underlying reality.¹⁸ ...The apparent world is caused by our imagination, in its ignorance. It is not real. It is like seeing the snake in the rope. It is like a passing dream"¹⁹

Thus, while in the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and Plotinus’s metaphysics, the world is represented as an illusory, but objective, phenomenon produced by God, Shankara’s ‘doctrine of superimposition’ asserts that the perceived universe is merely an imaginary projection by the individual mind or soul of a world of objects upon the substrate of *Brahman*—in other words, that it is an illusion that takes place solely in the mind, or individual *jiva*.

Shankara, following in the tradition of his *paramguru* (his guru’s guru), Gaudapada, taught that only Brahman exists, and that the universally perceived phenomena of ‘the world’ appear, not because they are actually ‘created’ by God, but rather because we humans, while actually seeing only *Brahman*, project, or “superimpose” names and forms upon that substratum by the power of our own imaginations. He interprets God’s power of *Maya* (illusion) to be, not God’s power to ‘create’ an illusory objective universe, but a power placed by God within the human soul to project, or imagine, a world where there is truly only Brahman, much as one might imagine a snake where there is actually a rope, or a body of water where there is only a dry desert. But since Brahman is not an object of our perception upon which an illusory object might be superimposed, we must wonder how such analogies could apply.

The theory of ‘superimposition’ asserts that the subjective human ego, or *jiva*, endowed with a Mayic power, projects an entire universe of objects upon

Brahman—but we must remember that in Shankara’s time no one even imagined that man had *evolved* over time from more primitive species. Insofar as Shankara knew, man had existed forever; and had always been around to imagine a world. Like the author of Genesis, he was ignorant of the fact that prior to around two and a half million years ago there were no humans. And if the world could only be ‘imagined’ by a human being, then not even an imaginary world existed prior to the evolution from the lower animal species to the human species. If this were true, the present evidence for the evolutionary history of the universe, from its beginning to the development of *homo sapiens*, including astronomical observations, geological strata, fossils, etc., tells of a world that never existed, since there was no one around at that time to imagine it.

The obvious question that arises is: if the world, the universe, is much older than man, as it appears to be, how could the world possibly be the product of man’s mind? Had Shankara known of the relatively recent origin of man, it would have been necessary to suggest that perhaps the animal and even bacterial life-forms, who seem also to perceive a world of objects, project the world by means of the same Mayic power of imagination, this same mental projection! But what of the compelling evidence for the existence of the universe during preceding billions of years prior to the appearance of even the simplest forms of life? How could we possibly justify the belief that the universe only came into existence when there was a conscious living being to imagine or superimpose it upon Brahman? Because there are so many questions that arise when this theory is examined closely, the majority of cautious contemporary thinkers, influenced by current scientific observations, tend to accept that the universe of matter is an external, objective illusion, rather than an internal, subjective one.

Our current understanding of the nature of the material world leads us to conclude that the forms we perceive through our senses are ultimately mere agglomerations of the electromagnetic charges and emergent forces that constitute the fermions and bosons produced from the original electromagnetic radiation (the ‘Great Radiance’), and that the perceivable forms produced by the congregation of these insubstantial wave-particles are virtually “illusory”. Shankara, however, could not possibly have understood in his own time that the appearance of physical matter arises from the organization of intangible submicroscopic wave-particles in such a way that they present the appearance of substance and extension.

Shankara knew nothing of such wave-particles. Though he had not imagined them, we have every reason to believe that they nonetheless existed, even then. He did know, from his unitive visionary experience, that the Soul (*Atman*) is identical with Brahman and that, in relation to eternal Being, the phenomenal world is illusory;

but, without a knowledge of the true nature of matter, and perhaps influenced somewhat by the Buddhist metaphysics popular at the time, he was able to account for the unreality of the world only by assuming that it was an illusion produced by a Mayic ignorance (*avidya*) within the human mind, causing the mind to *imagine* a world exterior to it.

The revelatory unitive experience is the same for all who have known it, and yet it is interpreted variously. The unitive experience has the quality of being ultimately real, unmediated, indubitable. And the experience of returning from that unitive vision to the world of duality, to the phenomenal world of space and time, *does* seem like re-entering a mind-projection, a hologram, or a dream scene. In fact, it *is* a mind-based projection. But it is not the projection of one's *own* mind; it is a projection of the one Divine Mind, who has formed this universe of His own Light.

For everyone who has experienced this revelation, the Divine Self is realized to be the source and essence of the universe; but in the one interpretation, the Self projects an Energy from Itself that forms the perceived universe; and in the other interpretation, the Self projects (or imagines) a non-existent universe *within* the perceiver. The one interpretation states that the universe exists in the Mind of God, even when there is no one else to be consciously aware of it; and the other interpretation holds that the universe exists in the mind of the individual soul, and that without a soul to be conscious of it, the universe does not exist. Which view do *you* regard as "true"?

Unfortunately, whether you may think that the phenomenal universe is an illusory reality produced objectively by the Divine Mind, or a subjective illusion produced by a Divine Mayic capacity within the human mind, the resolution of this dispute is not, and probably never will be, amenable to conclusive and demonstrable proof. However, the *practical* conclusion remains the same in either case, as expressed by Shankara in the following premise:

Brahma satyam

Jagat mithya

Jivo brahmaiva naparah

("Brahman is the Reality;
The phenomenal universe is merely an appearance, an illusion;
The soul is truly Brahman, without a doubt.")

You will find in this statement no disparity with the vision of Plotinus. In fact, while it's a bit of a strain to shift between the two terminologies and to translate one to the other, anyone who takes the trouble to do so will discover that the philosophical visions of Plotinus and Shankaracharya are essentially the same. In all *practical* respects, Plotinus and Shankaracharya are seen to be in perfect agreement.

We must acknowledge that, although neither of them clearly comprehended the nature of the phenomenal world (nor did anyone else before the mid-twentieth century), both Shankaracharya and Plotinus had intimately known the one Reality behind all appearances. They were both illumined seers, and master teachers. There is no doubt that both men came to the direct knowledge of the Self as their true, eternal identity, and knew: 'There is no other true identity but the eternal One by whom and in whom all exists.' And the central and most important message of both Shankaracharya and Plotinus is the message of all authentic seers of the Truth: 'Realize the Reality for yourself! Renounce all transient and illusory appearances and focus upon the Eternal. Know your lasting and permanent Self, where all knowledge and all Bliss resides, and free yourself from the snare of ignorance and suffering.'

* * *

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. The Upanishads were translated from Sanskrit to Persian in 1657 by Dara Shikoh; translated into Latin by Duperron in 1801; translated into German by Schopenhauer in 1818; and translated into English by Max Muller in 1879-1884.
2. For a scholarly, informative, and well-documented treatment of the historical themes in this article, see Thomas McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought*, N.Y., Allworth Press, 2002.
3. *Maitri Upanishad*, 3.2. For a thorough and lucid explanation of the Nondual philosophy of Vedanta, see Swami Nikhilananda, *The Principal Upanishads: "General Introduction" and "Description of Brahman in The Upanishads"*, pp. 13-64; London, George Allen & Unwin, 1963; reprinted by Dover Publications, Inc., Mineola, New York, 2003.
4. *Svetasvatara Upan.*, I:7-10; II:15.
5. *Ibid.*, I:1-3, 6.
6. *Ibid.*, II:16; III:2.

7. *Bhagavad Gita*, VII.5; Swami Nikhilananda (trans.), *The Bhagavad Gita*, New York, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1944, 1987; p. 83.
8. *Bhagavad Gita*, IX.7, 8; *Ibid.*, p.103.
9. *Bhagavad Gita*, VII.5; *Ibid.*, p. 83.
10. *Bhagavad Gita*, IX. 4; *Ibid.*, p. 102.
11. *Bhagavad Gita*, VIII.3; *Ibid.*, p. 92.
12. *Bhagavad Gita*, XIII. 16; *Ibid.*, p.151.
13. *Bhagavad Gita*, II. 20, 17; *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 19.
14. *Bhagavad Gita*, II. 13, 22; *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 20.
15. Shankaracharya, *Commentaries on The Vedanta Sstras*; Thibaut, G. (trans.), *The Vedanta Sstras of Badarayana*, N.Y., Dover Publications, 1962; Vol. I, p. 51; Vol. II, pp.173-74.
16. Shankara, *Vivekachudamani*, trans. by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood; Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1947; p. 64.
17. Shankara, *Atma Bodha*, 31.
18. *Vivekachudamani*, op. cit., p. 71.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 73. In order to illustrate the process of ‘superimposition’, Shankara utilizes several examples: A person might see a piece of rope lying on the ground and think that it is a snake. In such a case, that person is said to ‘superimpose’ a snake on the rope. Or, one might be walking by a field at night, and imagine that a wooden post is a man standing in the field; in such a case, one is said to have ‘superimposed’ a man on the post. Another example Shankara offers is that of a person seeing a piece of an oyster shell—what is known as ‘mother of pearl’; but he imagines that it is a piece of silver. He is said to have ‘superimposed’ the silver on the mother of pearl. All of these examples are intended to be analogous to the superimposition by the *jiva* of a world of objects upon what is really Brahman. And, while it’s easy to see how one could mistake one form for another, such as mistaking a post for a man, or a rope for a snake, or a piece of shell for silver; Brahman is formless. How, then, could one mistake Brahman for a universe of forms? The analogies do not stand up to scrutiny. Shankara does distinguish between a personal illusion (*pratibhasika*) and a universal, or collective, illusion (*vyavaharika*); but, according to Shankara, in both cases, it is the individual *jiva* who is responsible for the creation and maintenance of his own illusory perceptions.

* * *

19. The Svetasvatara Upanishad (9-25-14)

Vedanta, which means ‘the end of the Vedas’, refers to the ancient Hindu scriptures called the *Upanishads*. The Upanishads were written by numerous anonymous authors at various times, from around 800 B.C.E. to well into the Current Era. One of the most highly respected and honored of these is the *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, guessed to have been written around 400 B.C.E.:

Svetasvatara Upanishad Verse Translation by Swami Abhayananda

Part One:

1. Hari Om. Seekers of Brahman enquire:
‘What is the Cause of the universe? Is it Brahman?
Why are we born? What upholds our lives?
And where do we go after life on earth?
O knower of Brahman, what compels us to exist
In this world of joys and sorrows?’
2. ‘Is it Time, or Nature, or Fate, or merely Chance?
Is it the Elements? Or perhaps the Soul itself is the Cause.
All these others exist only for the sake of the Soul;
But, since the Soul is under the sway of joys and sorrows,
It cannot, therefore, be the ultimate Cause.’
3. Then, through deep meditation, these seekers realized
That the power of God is the ultimate Cause.¹
Though hidden by, and existing within, His own effects,
It is the Lord alone, who rules all those other sources—
Such as Time and the individual Soul.
4. They saw the Wheel of existence,² which has a single rim
Covered by a three-layered tire.³
This Wheel has sixteen parts,⁴ fifty spokes,⁵
Twenty spoke-connectors,⁶ and six eight-part divisions.⁷
It binds with a single rope,⁸ that goes in three directions,⁹
And whose illusion arises from two causes.¹⁰
5. Or [the world-illusion may be likened to] a River with five currents,¹¹

Made turbulent and meandering by the five elements,¹²
 And lashed into waves by the five organs of action.¹³
 This River has its origin in the mind,
 Which produces the five kinds of perceptions.¹⁴
 It has five whirlpools;¹⁵ its rapids are the five miseries.¹⁶
 It has fifty branches,¹⁷ and five dangerous obstructions.¹⁸

6. Within this Wheel, in which all of us live and seek rest,
 The swan-like soul wanders restlessly;
 It thinks it's separate and far from God,
 But by His Grace, it awakes to its identity with Him.
7. I sing of Brahman—the subject, the object, the Lord of all.
 He's the immutable Foundation of all that exists;
 Those souls who realize Him as their very own Self
 Are freed forever from the need for rebirth.
8. The Lord is the Support of both aspects of Reality:
 He is the Imperishable and the perishable, the Cause and the effect.
 He takes the form of the limited soul, appearing to be bound;
 But, in fact, He is forever free.
9. The Lord appears as Creator, and also as the limited soul;
 He is also the Energy which creates the appearance of the world.
 Yet He remains unlimited and unaffected by these appearances;
 When one knows that Brahman, then that soul becomes free.
10. The forms of the world fade like clouds in the sky;
 But the Lord remains ever-One and unchanged.
 He is the Ruler of all worlds and all souls;
 Through meditation on Him, and communion with Him,
 He becomes known as the Self, and from illusion one is freed.
11. When the Lord is known, then a man's soul is free;
 He'll never need to know sorrow or birth again.
 Through devotional love, he'll rise to the highest state,
 And rest forever in the bliss of God.
12. These three: the soul, the world, and the Lord of all,

Are nothing else but the one Brahman.
 It's Brahman alone who exists as everyone and everything;
 Beyond Brahman, the Self, there is nothing to know.

13. Though it can't be seen, fire is latent in the wood;
 It's born as a flame when the wood is rubbed.
 Like the fire, the Atman, the Self, is concealed within man;
 By the power of meditation on OM, it becomes revealed.
14. Man, in this analogy, is like a piece of wood;
 And meditation on OM is the means to kindle the flame.
 By joining to man the heat of meditation,
 The truth of the Self, like a flame, is born.
15. Just as oil is in seeds, and butter is in milk,
 As water is in river-beds, and fire is in wood,
 So is the one Self concealed in all selves;
 To those who seek it earnestly, it becomes revealed.
16. That Self is in everything, just as butter's in milk;
 Through self-enquiry and *tapasya*, it becomes revealed to man.
 That Self is the Brahman of whom I sing!
 That Self is the Brahman of whom I sing!

Part Two:

1. May the light of the shining Sun
 Join our minds and our hearts to God.
 May He also support our lives
 By filling our bodies with Light from above.
2. With His blessings, and by His Light
 We'll join our hearts and our minds to God;
 We'll surely reach to the highest state
 By earnest effort and faithful meditation.
3. May the Sun grant this boon to me:
 Let my mind and my senses be fixed on God.
 Direct them inward, and thereby reveal,
 By means of inner knowledge, that radiant One.

4. Surely it would be of benefit to everyone
To make such a prayer to the lordly Sun;
For he is the witness of everyone;
He grants his gifts to deserving men.
5. O senses—and O gods who rule each one!
I offer this prayer to the Lord, our Source:
Let me be one with Thyself, O God;
May my song be heard by Thy own dear sons!
6. Let me be surrendered to the fire within;
Let me make offerings to the prana in me.
May I drink of the nectar of inner Bliss;
Let this be my ritual worship of Thee.
7. O man, serve God by the light of the Sun;
Serve Him who engendered this whole universe.
In deep meditation, become one with Him;
Then you'll no longer feel bound by the fruits of your works.
8. A wise man should sit with his body erect;
With his head, neck and shoulders aligned.
He should turn both his mind and his senses within;
Then, by God's trusty boat, he'll cross over this world.
9. A yogi should see that his prana's controlled;
His breath should flow softly and evenly.
It is then that the mind may be held and made calm,
Just as a wild horse may be controlled by its reins.
10. A yogi should sit in a place that's confined,
Where no sounds and no sights tend to distract the mind.
It should be a place free of wind, and of smoke,
A place that is level, comfortable and pure.
11. When yoga is practiced, the light of the mind
May take the form of the Sun, or of fire;
One may also see images of snow-flakes within,
Or fire-flies, or lightning, a gem, or the moon.

12. The fire of this yoga consumes everything,
And purifies each of the elements within:
Fire, water, earth, air, and the ether as well;
Then a yogi becomes free from birth, illness, and death.
13. The signs of perfection in yoga, it's said,
Are lightness of body and bodily health,
A complexion that's clear, and a voice that is sweet,
A naturally sweet fragrance, and freedom from desire.
14. Just as gold, which is contained in the ore,
Becomes manifest when all dross is burned away,
A yogi, in whom God is revealed,
Knows that he's one with the Self, and sorrows no more.
15. When a yogi beholds the true nature of God,
He discovers the Light of his own inner Self.
He is one with the unborn, unchangeable Lord;
And he too is free from all limiting bonds.
16. When that Lord, who pervades all the worlds everywhere,
Gave birth to the first motion, He manifested Himself as creation.
It's Him alone who is born in this world;
He lives within all beings; it's only Him everywhere.
17. To that effulgent Lord who's in fire and in the great oceans,
Who lives as this world, who's in plants and in trees—
To that Lord let us sing! Give all glory to Him!
To that Lord let us sing! Give all glory to Him!

Part Three:

1. He is the One who rules all of us;
His omniscient Power rules all of the worlds.
Though He is continually creating and dissolving,
He remains unaffected, ever-One and unchanged.
Those sages who know Him have passed beyond death.
2. Those who have known Him say that
Even though He manifests all the worlds by His Power,
He always remains One and unchanged.

He lives as the one Self within everyone;
He's the Creator and Protector to whom all beings return.

3. He has eyes everywhere and mouths everywhere;
Everywhere are His arms and His feet.
The wings of all birds, and all men's arms are His own;
Both the heavens and the earth belong to Him.
4. May Shiva, the omniscient Lord of the world—
The Creator of gods and Bestower of powers,
The One who supports all this vast universe—
Endow me with a mind whose vision is clear!
5. O Shiva! Thou indwelling, joy-giving Lord!
Be gracious and look upon us with Thy love.
Grant us Thy glance and Thy favor, O Lord.
Dispel all our evil! Dispel all our fear!
6. O Shiva! Thou indwelling, joy-giving Lord!
Do not let loose Thy pain-bearing arrows!
Thou art our Protector; protect us, O Lord.
Do not give injury to man or the world!
7. He is greater than the world; He's beyond what's perceived.
Though He lives within man, He has no limits or bounds.
When a man realizes that Lord who pervades everything,
He knows, at the same time, his own deathless Self.
8. I know that one Self who shines like the Sun
Through all the deep folds of the darkness within.
This knowledge gives freedom from death and from fear;
It's the sole means to the attainment of life's highest goal.
9. The whole universe is filled with the Self;
There is nothing other or greater than Him.
There is nothing smaller or larger than Him;
He stands all alone, like a glorious tree.
10. Though He lives within the world, He stands far beyond it;
He has no form; nor has He any blemish or pain.

Those who have known Him have passed beyond death;
But, until a man knows Him, he suffers in pain.

11. All faces are His; all men's heads are His own.
All necks are His necks; He's in everyone's heart.
He pervades everything; He's known as 'the Lord'.
He's the compassionate Master who's found everywhere.
12. He is the great Self, the Purusha;
He's the Lord who creates, preserves, then destroys what He's made.
From within men, He inspires them to be good and pure;
He's the one Ruler, the immortal Light within all.
13. The Purusha, who's no bigger than a thumb, is the Self;
He has made His abode in the hearts of all beings.
The mind, which reflects knowledge, can know Him within;
And those who have known Him have passed beyond death.
14. With thousands of heads, eyes and feet,
The Purusha is greater than the world and all space;
He contains all that was, is, or ever shall be.
He's the undying Lord of all creatures that live.
15. He has hands everywhere, and feet everywhere;
Everywhere are His heads and His eyes.
His faces are everywhere, and He has ears everywhere;
Everything that exists is contained within Him.
16. Though He, Himself, has no senses, all senses are His;
He tastes all the pleasures of life through their use.
He's the Lord and Ruler of all that exists;
To all beings that live, He's the only Refuge.
17. The Self is the Swan who rules the whole universe
And everything in it that's moving or still;
But when He confines Himself as the Spirit in man,
He flies through the senses to sense-objects outside.
18. Without hands, He holds, and without feet, He runs;
He sees without eyes, and He hears without ears.

He knows everything through men's minds, but no one knows Him;
He's called 'the Origin', 'the One', 'the Highest', 'the All'.

19. That one conscious Self, the smallest of the small
And the largest of the large, is in everyone's heart;
The wise, by the Grace of God, become free
When they see in themselves that majestic Self
Who's beyond all desires.
20. I know the Immortal! The Origin! The Lord!
The Self of all beings who pervades everything!
All those who have known Him agree:
He's beginningless, endless, and eternally free.

Part Four:

1. Though producing the whole universe, He remains unaffected;
He never changes, but remains as He was.
Without ever revealing His purposes,
He continues to create, and then withdraw it all again.
May that effulgent Self enlighten our minds!
2. He is fire, He is the Sun; He is wind, He is the moon!
He is the stars, the mountains, the rivers and seas!
3. Thou art woman and man! Thou art the old and the young!
It is Thou alone, Lord, who hast taken all these forms!
4. Thou art the blue bee; Thou art the green parrot.
Thou art the dark clouds, the four seasons, the seas;
Thou art the birthless and limitless God
Who hast given birth to all worlds and all souls.
5. Unborn Nature, ¹⁹ with her *gunas*, gives birth to all forms;
Countless unborn souls seek pleasure in Nature's array.
But the unborn Self, who creates both Nature and souls,
Lives apart from Its creations, in eternal Freedom and Bliss.
6. The Self and the soul are like two birds, though one;

They have the same name, and they're in the same tree.
 But, while the soul tastes and enjoys the sweet fruits,
 The other eats not; He's the Witness, the Self.

7. The soul, through enjoyment, forgets it's the Self;
 And, feeling bewildered and helpless, it moans.
 But, when it beholds that its own Self is the glorious Lord all adore,
 It forgets all its previously felt grief.
8. Of what use then are the Vedas to one who has seen
 That Brahman in whom the Vedas and all gods are contained?
 He knows the eternal Essence of which all souls are made!
 Knowing that, he possesses a happiness that is lasting and true.
9. All the scriptures, all worship and sacrifices,
 All tapasya performed in the future or past,
 Along with the Vedas, come from Brahman's Power;²⁰
 It's His net that entangles, and He²¹ who's ensnared.
10. The world and all souls take on form by His Power;
 He, the great Lord, is governing everything.
 The whole universe, and all objects within it,
 Are only constituents of His manifest Being.
11. By knowing that One who exists as the world—
 That One in whom everyone is born, in whom everyone dies—
 By knowing that Lord, the Bestower of Grace,
 The adorable God, one attains supreme peace.
12. May Shiva, the Creator of the gods and their powers,
 The omniscient Support of the world,
 He who gives birth to all space and all time,
 Endow us with wisdom and clarity of mind!
13. To that Lord, who is King of all gods and all worlds,
 The ruler of all creatures on two legs or four,
 That blissful and effulgent Lord whom we love,
 Let us give all our worship and serve only Him.
14. He is the Creator of all forms—all's contained within Him;

His chaos surrounds Him, yet He's ever-unmoved.
 He's the undivided One who pervades everything;
 By knowing that One, man attains the supreme peace.

15. He is the Possessor and King of the whole universe,
 Concealing Himself in the hearts of all beings.
 From there, He inspires all the sages and gods;
 By knowing that Lord, man himself becomes free.
16. As cream is in milk, that one Self is in all;
 Subtle and hidden, He pervades everything.
 One who knows that radiant God who is Bliss
 Becomes released from all the bonds of this world.
17. He is the Self-revealed Creator and Pervader of all;
 He dwells as the Self in the hearts of all beings.
 He's revealed by discrimination, renunciation, and knowledge;
 Those who know Him are freed from the bondage of death.
18. When His Light dispels the darkness of man's ignorance,
 Both existence and non-existence vanish; day and night disappear.
 Brahman, and Brahman alone, is all that exists;
 From His light comes the Sun and the wisdom of man.
19. The mind cannot grasp Him, either with form or without;
 We call Him 'Great Glory', but there's no image of Him.
 He can be seen, not with the eyes, but with consciousness, within;
 Those who have seen Him are eternally free.
20. O unmanifest Lord, grant refuge to me!
 O Rudra, Protector, keep watch over me!
 Do not, in Thy anger, destroy us or our dwellings;
 Spare us and our children, we beg Thee, O God!

Part Five:

1. That infinite Brahman, who is eternally One,
 Contains both ignorance and knowledge within Him.
 With one, man seeks the world; with the other, he seeks God;
 But He who contains them is neither the one, nor the other.

2. He's beyond both knowledge and ignorance;
He's the Governor and Dispenser of our every thought.
He controls all beings as their single Source;
He knew the end of creation at the moment of its birth.
3. He manifested this universe as a spider manifests its web,
And, in time, He'll withdraw it into Himself again.
He created all these forms; He pervades all bodies and senses.
He's the One in all, the great Lord of all beings.
4. As the Sun's radiance illumines the East and the West,
The North and the South, above and below,
So does the Lord, the adorable One,
Illumine and control all that He's made.
5. He is the Cause and Controller of the ways of all things;
He ripens and brings to fruition all things on the earth.
6. To those who seek Him in scriptures, He is hidden;
But He's revealed to those sages who become one with Him.
7. Every soul is impelled to act by the power of Nature;
It sows actions and reaps the fruits of those actions.
Continually assuming new forms and new qualities,
The soul continues to wander over the paths of life.
8. The soul is small, but it shines like the Sun;
It possesses a will and the sense of 'I'.
Because of its identification with the intellect,
That perfect Self appears separate, weak, and of little worth.
9. The wandering soul may be compared
To a hair, divided a hundred times,
Then again divided by a hundred more;
And yet that soul has no finite bounds.
10. It is not female, nor is it male;
Nor is it something in between.
The soul becomes identified with

Whatever body it dwells within.

11. Desiring fruits, the embodied soul
Attains its goals, and then becomes attached;
Experiencing pain, it learns, and in this way, grows,
As a body grows by taking food and drink.
12. The embodied soul, by virtue of its various actions,
Adopts new forms, either subtle or gross;
And, according to the knowledge and desires it possesses,
It assumes a new body to enjoy the world.
13. But once it knows the infinite Lord—
The Creator and Pervader of all life's forms,
That One who remains unmoved, while all is in motion—
That soul is released from all its bonds.
14. Those souls who know that effulgent Lord—
The One realized by the pure of heart,
The Creator, Destroyer, and Cause of all—
Those souls are freed from embodied life.

Part Six:

1. Some people believe that the world is caused
And controlled by natural laws or by time.
Such deluded persons are truly foolish;
The universe moves by the will of God.
2. The one Consciousness that pervades this universe
Is the Author and Witness of the laws and of time;
The elements obey the omniscient Lord;
Ponder this, O learned and knowledgeable men!
3. A yogi who works, but renounces the fruits of his work,
Who practices discipline, and serves his Teacher,
Attains, by virtue of the habits he acquires,
The soul's Liberation, the highest goal.
4. One who performs all his actions in service of God,

Who releases all claim to the fruits of his work,
 Comes to know his Self as the one Self of all,
 And is finally freed from all actions in time.
 When he has transcended all delusion, he's unbound by past actions;
 Though the already-ripened fruits of past actions must be received.
 But when, in time, even these are exhausted,
 The yogi becomes free; he attains the Divine.

5. The Lord is the sole Originator, the Source, in which all is united;
 That One remains undivided, beyond countless eons of time.
 Liberation is attained when a man knows that Lord,
 The Father of all, who abides in the heart.
6. All this universe sprouts from Him;
 He is the Root of the entire vast tree of creation.
 Living within all, He's the Bestower of all good things;
 Liberation is attained when a man knows that Lord.
7. We know the supreme Self, the Lord of all lords—
 The God of all gods, the King of all kings,
 The Imperishable behind the perishable world which He made—
 The Self-revealing, adorable, Lord of the world.
8. He has no body or organs or limbs; He's not like anything else that exists.
 Scriptures cannot describe Him and speak only of His Power.²²
 He's able to do anything that He wills;
 His Power is boundless, and He knows everything.
9. He is ruled by no other; there's no Lord over Him.
 He has left not the slightest trace by which He can be found.
 He, Himself, is the Cause and the Lord of all lords;
 He was fathered by no one and is governed by none.
10. May that Lord, like a spider concealed in its own web,
 Whose threads form the fabric of this world—
 May that Lord who is hidden by His own veiling Power,²³
 Unite us in Brahman, release us in Him!
11. The non-dual and resplendent Lord resides
 As the Self in all creatures and all things;

He is the One who impels all to action and witnesses all.
While pervading everything, He remains absolutely free.

12. He controls everyone as their innermost Self;
He is the one Seed from whom innumerable sprouts have arisen.
Only those who see Him within themselves
Obtain the gift of eternal Bliss.
13. He is the Eternal within the temporal, the Infinite within form;
He's the One within many, who grants all desires.
Only those who see Him within themselves
Obtain the gift of eternal Peace.
14. In Him, there's no Sun, no moon, and no stars;
Within Him there is no lightning or fire.
Because of Him, the Sun, the moon, and the stars all shine;
Their light comes from Him; He's the Source of all light.
15. There is nothing in this universe but the Self, the 'I AM';
Like a flame, He lives in the hearts of all beings.
The only way to pass beyond death is to know Him;
There's no other means, and there's no other End.
16. He is the only support of the soul and the world;
He is the sole Cause of both bondage and liberation.
He is the Creator, the Knower, the Self of all things;
All good comes from Him. He's the omniscient Lord.
17. He is the Controller of everything in this world;
Bondage and Liberation are given by Him.
He, the deathless Protector of everyone,
Is the Ruler of all. To whom else might you turn?
18. As one who seeks Liberation, I take refuge in Him,
The Revealer of the Self, the Giver of all knowledge,
The Creator of Brahma, who, at the beginning of time,
Gave expression to true Knowledge,²⁴ and shared it with men.
19. When a man shall be able to roll up the sky like a rug,
Then suffering will end without knowledge of the Lord.

20. He is One, without actions or parts,
Remaining serene, like a fire whose fuel is exhausted.
He is ever-blameless and unattached to the world;
For men, He is the supreme bridge to Immortality.
21. Svetasvatara, by the grace of the Lord,
And by his tapasya, has realized God.
He's therefore proclaiming this knowledge to men,
The knowledge that's cherished by sages and saints.
22. The knowledge of God, the one supreme Truth,
Has been proclaimed in every age, every yuga.
It should only be given to the pure of heart;
It may certainly be given to a disciple or a son.
23. When given to one who is wise,
And who has love for God and for his teacher,
These truths will surely give Light to his soul.
They'll surely give Light to his soul.

* * *

NOTES:

1. 'The power of God', original Sanskrit: *devatma shakti*.
2. (The verses 4 and 5 from the first section appear to be interpolations, perhaps by priestly copiers who wanted to insert their own traditional lists of metaphysical categories as metaphors in this Upanishad. It is easy to see that these two verses are very incongruous with the rest of the Upanishad and are unlikely to be from an enlightened soul such as Svetasvatara; nonetheless, we offer these interpretations): 'The wheel of existence' refers to the spinning universe.
3. 'Three-layered tire' is the three gunas: rajas, tamas, and sattva.
4. 'Sixteen parts' is the five elements, five organs of perception, five organs of action, and the mind.
5. 'Fifty spokes' is the five kinds of misperception (ignorance, self-love, attachment, hatred, and clinging to life); twenty-eight disabilities, nine inversions (or opposites) of satisfaction, and eight inversions of perfections (siddhis).
6. 'Twenty spoke-connectors' is the ten organs and their corresponding objects.
7. 'Six eight-part divisions' is the eight aspects of Prakrti: akasha, air, fire, water, earth, mind, buddhi, and I-consciousness, plus the eight bodily substances

(*dhatus*): skin, cuticle, flesh, blood, fat, bone, marrow, and semen; plus the eight supernatural powers (*siddhis*), the eight attitudes (*bhavas*): righteousness, knowledge, renunciation, majesty, unrighteousness, ignorance, non-renunciation, and poverty; plus the eight gods: Brahman, Prajapati, deities, gandarvas, yakshas, rakshashas, pitris, and fiends; plus the eight virtues: compassion, forgiveness, absence of malice, purity, spontaneity, goodness, liberality, and absence of desires.

8. 'A single rope' is the binding rope of love.
9. 'The three directions' of love are love for (producing) children, love of food, and love of the heavenly worlds.
10. 'Illusion arising from two causes' is the illusion that the body is the Self, which arises from both virtuous action and sinful action.
11. 'River with five currents' is the world-illusion with the five organs of perception: the ears, nose, tongue, skin, and eyes.
12. 'The five elements' are earth, air, water, fire, and aether (*akasha*).
13. 'The five organs of action' are: the hands, feet, tongue, and the organs of procreation and evacuation.
14. 'The five kinds of perceptions' are: taste, hearing, vision, touch, and smell.
15. 'The five whirlpools' are the objects of the five senses.
16. 'The five miseries' are: resting in the womb, being born, growing old, becoming ill, and dying.
17. 'The fifty branches' are unknown. Some say they refer to a category in Sankhya philosophy.
18. 'The five dangerous obstructions' are ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion, and clinging to life.
19. 'Unborn Nature' is *Prakrti* in the original Sanskrit.
20. 'Brahman's Power' is originally His *Maya*, the power of world-manifestation.
21. The net of Maya is His Power, and yet 'He', in the form of the jiva, becomes ensnared in the net of Maya.
22. 'Speak only of His Power'; in other words, since the unmanifest Brahman cannot be described in words, scriptures speak mainly of His manifested appearances, produced by His Power of Maya.
23. 'His own veiling Power' refers again to His Maya, His manifestory Power.
24. 'Gave expression to true knowledge' refers to His imparting of the Vedas.

* * *

20. Seeing Is Believing (from *Mystical Theology*, 2012; rev. 8-8-2017)

The metaphysical understanding of the Western philosophical tradition is virtually identical to that of the Eastern philosophical tradition. Only the names used by each tradition are different. The current metaphysics in both East and West holds that the Absolute Ground, the transcendent One, possesses a Creative Power that we call *God*, or *the Creator*. In the beginning, that creative Power of God manifested the Light of creation; that Light became form, and every form is permeated with the Divine consciousness. For, just as our own consciousness exists as the substratum of every one of our dream-forms or thought-constructs, and permeates them all, so does He, the universal Consciousness, permeate the forms of this world, made of His self-produced light. Over the course of time, His life awakens within these forms;¹ and the forms evolve, culminating in man, in whom God's consciousness exists as individual souls. When He reveals Himself as the soul within us, that conscious soul realizes itself to be none else but Him.

When we say that the universe is “ensouled”, it means that the one Soul, the Mind of God, permeates and is present in everything. That presence manifests in this universe as an all-pervading Spirit, or *anima mundi*, which enfolds, inheres in and embodies every element of this cosmic appearance. It is a unified Spirit in which all exists, and by which all constituent appearances are permeated and governed—just as, in our own personal experience, all images are contained, permeated and governed by the mind in which they appear. It is in such a conception of the universe and the Soul that we find, for example, the possibility of a correspondence between existing planetary patterns and the incarnation of individual souls, the sum of whose karmic histories are depicted in those patterns. Indeed, such a miraculous correspondence *requires* a universe that is ensouled, one that is pervaded by a universal Spirit, or *anima mundi*. It requires a universe in which all things move together of one accord, in which assent is given throughout to even the most insignificant occurrence.

Soul, as an intelligent organizing principle, is present in every single particle of matter; but the limited sense of an independent self which we identify as ‘our soul’ is perceived as a conscious individual identity that exists distinct from body and material things. It is a conscious ‘I’ that, while *associated* with the body, brain, and sense perception, is independent of all these. However—wonder of wonders—when our soul ascends to its transcendent Identity by the grace of God, it experiences that Identity as *both* the material manifestations *and* the universal Soul within material manifestations as well. For, in God (the Divine Mind), the two are

undivided; they are one unitive Spirit. One all-pervading Consciousness is the substratum of both the material world and the all-pervading Soul. That Divine Mind who manifests as the manifold world and all souls remains one undivided Spirit, guiding all things, and so throughout the cosmos “all things move together of one accord, and assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.” What a mysterious and wonderful world Thou hast made, O Lord! Who can fathom it?

When God (the Divine Mind, the Creative Power) reveals Himself in man, the illusory duality of body and soul vanishes. Like all dualities, this one exists only in the spatio-temporal reality produced by God’s projected Light. When the individual mind (soul) ascends to the Eternal, it then sees from the unitive perspective of the Eternal, wherein body and soul are both contained. Here, all dualities vanish, and only the undivided Mind remains. Here, the division between I and Thou is no more; now and then both vanish in the Timeless; life and death no longer stand apart. Only the One and Its Creative Power shines eternally.² This experience is the revelation from which all religion derives. It is this mystical experience that provides the irrefutable evidence for the Divine identity of the soul. Those who have not experienced that ‘mystical’ union may argue the question of the immortality of the soul, but for those who have been graced with that unitive experience, no question remains. The Divine Mind is an experiential reality that is a thousand times more impressive than mere thought or sense experience. It is an experience more indubitable than the light of day.

God’s creative Light is eternal, though the forms it takes are temporal and transient. Likewise, Soul is eternal; the forms it takes are temporal and transient and are stamped with the pattern of the heavens at the time of their embodiment. As limited souls, we journey through time from body to body in quest of the perfect joy and satisfaction that already exists in its fullness within us. Our souls are limited rays of the one Sun, droplets of the one ocean of Joy; and when we are ripe for seeing, He opens our eyes: He reveals our true nature, showing us that we are His own Beauty, His own unlimited Vastness, His own sweet Joy. He shows us who we have always been.

It is this experience that prompted the authors of the Upanishads to proclaim, “That thou art”; it is this experience that prompted Jesus to declare “I and the Father are one”, and al-Hallaj to declare, *an al Haqq*, “I am the transcendent Reality”. It is this experience that provides the self-evident proof of our Divine Ground and ultimate Identity. It is an experience that is accessible, by the Grace of God, through contemplative introspection.

The soul experiences its “union” with God when He reveals His eternal presence in the soul. This vision is the greatest attainment possible to man, and yet it is not an attainment that can be taught. The reason is that it is not something that can be accomplished by man. A man can only make himself receptive to it, but it is accomplished by God Himself. It is a gift. I am not speaking of the mere intellectual recognition of the fact that the one all-pervading Spirit is the only one who exists; the *experience* of union entails the actual upliftment of the soul to its divine Source, so that it is no longer aware of its separate existence on this earth, but knows itself, for as long as that experience lasts, as God—transcendent to the cosmos and yet the life and conscious Spirit pervading the cosmos. It is a going-out of the limited soul-identity and an awakening to the consciousness of an unlimited, eternal and all-inclusive Identity. All questions are answered in this altered awareness—or rather, they are dissolved away in the sweetness of eternity, an eternity that is realized to be one’s own indubitable Self. Truly, there are no words to describe this ‘awakening’; but it is the foundation of all religion and all philosophy, and the bedrock of all certainty and satisfaction.

Those who have experienced that ‘awakening’ tend to espouse the metaphysical view, the mystical theology, that is commonly referred to as ‘the Perennial Philosophy’. It is the perennial expression of the revealed knowledge of the one eternal Spirit. Yet such reasoned arguments for the Divine creation of our world and the existence of our Divine soul are oftentimes utterly impotent to convince the determined advocates of a Godless and materialistic worldview. The materialist worldview is based entirely on the material sciences, and does not even give consideration to a metaphysics, insofar as “metaphysics” implies a non-physical reality creating, underlying and controlling the physical reality. The materialist worldview acknowledges the insubstantiality of matter at the quantum level, but it does not recognize a supernatural cause, a noumenal Source and Ruler of the phenomenal world of matter.

The proponents of materialism say that, ‘when the body dies, the consciousness associated with it dies as well; there is no second entity such as an enduring soul.’ ‘Life and consciousness’, they say, ‘are merely transient properties of matter, and have no existence apart from individual material bodies.’ And without some inner experience of God, they remain skeptical of the spiritual view, and rely solely on what they perceive through sense experience.

Also, those who *have* known God have found no objectively rational way of convincing such people of the existence of the Spirit, though throughout history

many have tried to do so. The Spirit must be experienced subjectively, and then only by God's self-revelation. It would seem that He has retained control of this knowledge among humans by causing it to be unknowable by the senses or by rational thought, and realizable only through His grace. Once He reveals Himself within our soul, we realize that we are His creations, made of His substance, and that we are utterly dependent upon Him. Then we learn to surrender our own will to His will; and this, in turn, alleviates us of all our errors, and brings about our own highest good and happiness. Without that self-revelation, we remain blind to Him in ourselves and in the world. This, too, is His doing; as He says: "I bring the dust of blindness". But He is also the remover of that blindness. He is not only the Light of the phenomenal world; He is also the inner Light that reveals His presence as our own Soul, our own divine Self.

This being the case, how can we enjoin others to awaken to the knowledge of God when such knowledge is only obtained through the Grace of God? Even the desire to know God arises through the workings of His Grace! What, then, can we do? It has been said that 'The breeze of His grace is always blowing; but it is we who must set our sails to receive that breeze'. I reply that it is only by His Grace that we are inspired to set our sails to receive Him. The truth is that He is doing everything, whether we are aware of it or not. "We" are *His* manifestations, and we live and move within His omnipresent Spirit.

However, as His manifestations, we possess the abilities that He has granted us; and one of those abilities is the power to exercise our individual wills. We are able to choose, and we are responsible for our choices; and it is we, as individual souls, who receive the consequences of those choices. Every moment, He offers us the choice of turning our intention to Him or to the illusory world:

*I have given sweets that decay to those that crave them;
I have given my wealth unto the poor and lonely.
My hands are open—nothing is concealed.³*

We choose, ultimately, not from reason's arguments or empirical proofs, but from the yearning that arises from the loving kinship of the soul to God. And the rationale for expounding rational arguments that tell of His presence and the possibility of knowing Him is that such reasonings are on rare occasions capable of prompting a recognition and a yearning in those who are readied for it, leading them to seek His revelation in their own hearts. And that too is His doing, as His presence in our hearts inspires both the expounding and the recognition.

Nonetheless, I fear that the great majority of souls living on earth today have yet to see beyond immediate appearances, have yet to experience God in their lives, have yet to experience the joy of the soul upon being uplifted to union with the Creator. They cannot therefore be expected to give credence to such a mystical worldview. They are bewitched by a fascination with and desire for the things of creation, and fail to recognize their Creator, or even their own souls. I have not the slightest doubt that these people will eventually come to recognize the Divine in themselves and in the world; but for the time being, they are blind, and therefore suffer many miseries. It is certain, however, that the Lord, in His justice and mercy, will bring them, in the course of time, to awaken from their slumbers, and will make Himself known to them, leading them to comfort and joy in His bosom.

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NOTES:

1. Many believe, as the respected Biologist, Michael Behe, believes, that the propensity for 'life' was pre-programmed into the evolution of matter from the beginning:

"I am not saying the origin of life was simply an extremely improbable accident. I am saying the origin of life was deliberately, purposely arranged, just as the fundamental laws and constants and many other anthropic features of nature were deliberately, purposefully arranged. But in what I'll call the "extended fine-tuning" view, the origin of life is merely an additional planned feature, culminating in intelligent life. The origin of life is simply closer to the very same goal that the other, more distant anthropic features (laws, chemical properties, and so forth) were also put in place to bring about." (Michael J. Behe, *The Edge of Evolution*, New York, Free Press, 2008; p. 216.)

2. This 'coincidence of opposites' in the unitive experience was first noted by Heraclitus. In fact, Heraclitus touched on nearly all of the elements of mystical experience, and yet his valuable insights have never been fully acknowledged or appreciated.

3. From Swami Abhayananda, "The Song of The Self" in *The Supreme Self*, Atma Books, Fallsburg, New York, 1984.

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21. How Little We Know About God (2008)

Just the other day, there was a segment on the radio highlighting a group of atheists. How smug they seemed with their scientific perspective on things, and how condescending they were toward those they referred to as “believers”, we poor ignorant masses of superstitious humanity. I could only laugh. Years ago, as a young man, I sympathized with their position. I saw no evidence for belief in God; in fact, those who embraced religion seemed to me merely passive followers of the naïve beliefs regarded as acceptable by the culture as a whole. When I was twenty-eight, however, my mind became opened to the possibility of the direct experience of God, and I went into solitary retreat in a mountain cabin to prepare myself for a direct meeting with God. That meeting came on the night of November 18, 1966.

I understand that a great majority of the people are dubious about the possibility of knowing God, face to face, so to speak; and I am at a loss as to how to overcome that doubt. Indeed, I have had to live for the past 40 years with the suspicion of mental delusion, dishonesty, or worse, from friends, family, and strangers alike. It is little consolation that such has been the case for nearly everyone throughout history who has had a similar “enlightening” experience. I have written several books about my experience in the attempt to share what I regard as a liberating knowledge, but it is clear that only a very small percentage of the people on earth are capable of receiving what I have to say. Much of the difficulty in communicating this knowledge comes from the inability of human language to convey Divine reality; only those who have been similarly graced with the knowledge of God know just how difficult such a task can be.

Along with what is known about God, I feel it is necessary as well to discuss what we do not know about God. I would like to discuss both of these topics. First, let me attempt to give some idea of what it is like to “see God”:

Oftentimes, such an experience occurs when the recipient is under some abnormal conditions, such as confinement or voluntary solitude that sets the stage for an interiorization of awareness. The well-known case of St. John of the Cross comes to mind. His “mystical” experience came to him while he was under confinement by the Inquisition in 16th century Spain. I recently came across a similar example, a contemporary man who experienced a liberating awakening while he was confined in a U.S. federal prison. My own solitude was voluntary, but just as radical as these two involuntary examples. I was in a deeply introspective and

prayerful state, as were the prisoners mentioned, and I experienced a sudden quietude of mind, along with an intensified and focused awareness, when there occurred a sudden shift in my consciousness. My reality had radically altered. Dualities that I take for granted in my normal awareness were gone, and I could see how my temporally-based mind had created the various dualities which arose in my world: love-hate, sorrow-joy, night-day, life-death, I-Thou, now-then, movement-stillness. Those were some of the dualities that were now non-existent; for I was no longer the individual person I had previously been. My consciousness had gradually changed (expanded?), and I was universally present, existing in all as all. Not only was I all that existed in this universe, I was the center of all, the divine Mind from which all emanated forth. What I experienced my Self to be is what men have always referred to as “God”. Yet, at the same time I was experiencing Eternity, I was also existent in the temporal world, writing by candlelight what I was experiencing in that other realm. Some who experience this God-identity are totally unaware of their temporal surroundings; but I was granted the ability to write *as* I experienced Divinity—perhaps because of my strong desire to share this knowledge (*You may see that example of divine writing in my book, The Supreme Self*).

One of the most difficult aspects of describing this experience is the fact that God is not experienced as someone or something that can be spoken of in the 3rd person as “He” or “Him”, or even spoken of in the 2nd person as “Thou” or “Thee”. In the integral mystical vision, God is experienced as one’s Self, and therefore can only be spoken of as “I”. In the religious traditions of India, this understanding is commonplace; God is spoken of as *Paramatman*, “the Supreme Self”, or simply as the congregation of the subjective qualities *sat*, “Being or Existence”; *chit*, “Consciousness”; and *ananda*, “Bliss”. Yet in our Western culture and language, the individual’s “I” (or *ego*) is limited exclusively to the phenomenally distinct person, and the Divine is exclusively referred to as “Thou”, “Him”, or “He”. In the mystic’s experience it is revealed that there is nothing other than God. He is the one Mind in whom everything exists. In other words, He is absolutely alone. He has no other to talk with or to whom He may relate—ever. Apparently, that is just how Existence *is*. There’s only Him. Realizing that, we may better understand why He recurrently fashions a universe, a cosmos of clashing diversities, within Himself. Does this universe have some other purpose besides amusement? I don’t know.

Perhaps the most persistent and perplexing question about God is “How can we know Him?” “How is the intimate experience of God to be attained?” Is there a reliable scientific answer to the question of how this can be done? And the answer

is “No”. Why do so few obtain the desired results when so many make the effort? There are clearly no clear-cut guidelines that can promise success in this endeavor. And, so, it has always been regarded as a matter of God’s grace or favor. This declaration of partiality on the part of God is regarded by many as unsatisfactory, though individual merit does not seem to be a determining factor either. Yet, how else may we regard it?

I have noticed some unusual planetary phenomena occurring at the time of my “mystical” experience and have suggested the possibility of a connection between the two occurrences; but the establishment of a tangible correlation between them awaits the collection of much more data. The fact is that we do not know why God reveals Himself in some and not in others.

The question of how a God, who is eternal Consciousness, is able to “create” this immense and multi-faceted universe is also one which presents a stumbling block for many. The discovery that the universe began around 14 billion years ago in what we now call ‘the Big Bang’ has led to the speculation that an initial ‘flash’ of light transformed into the material particles that became the building blocks of the universe. From my own visionary experience enabling me to know an eternal perspective, the universe is projected and withdrawn in a recurring cycle, in the manner of a breath that is exhaled and inhaled. Each cycle of that ‘breath’ lasts, from our temporal perspective, for billions of years; yet from the perspective of eternity, beyond time and space, each cycle endures for merely the space of a breath. God is not confined to human possibilities; He is at once transcendent/immanent Consciousness and active Energy, both unmoved and mover. He projects or emanates our universe in a manner similar to the way we project a thought-form or dream upon our own consciousness while remaining the witness to our creations. It may well be that that projection manifests as a sudden flash of light.

We might imagine a dream-scientist in one of our own projected dreams taking samples of the dream-landscape in order to analyze it, then placing the pieces under a dream-microscope. We can imagine such dream-scientists coming up with pronouncements about what this dream-terrain is made of, such as: “It seems to be made of waves!” “No, it is made of particles, but the particles themselves seem to be nothing more than a kind of energy!” “I’ll be damned! It’s both waves and particles! What *is* this stuff?” Truly, it is clear that such efforts would be utterly futile, and that, in order to really know the truth about the reality in which he lived, our dream-scientist would simply need to wake up. Our dreams thus show a close parallel to the nature of our ‘real’ universe. While I do not wish to denigrate the

efforts of scientists, I have seen that the true nature of ‘reality’ can only be realized by those who ‘wake up’ to the eternal Self.

While God is forever unaffected by the evolution of our cosmos, He is intimately involved in it. Just as our own consciousness is involved in the play of dreams, so is God playing in this universal drama. This world is evolving strictly according to His imagination; in fact, all things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain. He moves us according to our place in His evolutionary scheme, and our intelligence is inspired and informed at every moment by His will. He is the Self of our self, the Joy of our joy, and the world is as we individually see it. Over the millennia to come, as we evolve toward full awareness of His truth, our understanding will expand to encompass both the heavens and the earth, and we will more perfectly know and express our divine qualities, and experience more perfectly our divine wisdom and joy.

* * *

22. How Do We Know? (from *The Divine Universe*, 2008)

One of the recurring problems of philosophy involves the question ‘What is knowledge—and how do we define it?’ The various answers to this question constitute the branch of philosophy known as *epistemology*, a subject that has been much discussed and argued throughout history. It was a question frequently discussed among the early Greek philosophers, such as Plato and his teacher, Socrates, who held that the highest and most worthy kind of knowledge was the knowledge of the Divine Mind, the *Nous*. However, over time, the idea that such a knowledge was at all possible of attainment fell out of favor. Also, the subjective and undemonstrable nature of such knowledge made it suspiciously untrustworthy to some minds, and it became popular to regard only that knowledge whose evidence was sensory as valid, because it was experientially apparent and demonstrable. Sensory knowledge, i.e., the confirmation of sight, hearing, smell, touch, etc., came to be regarded, therefore, as the only acceptable criteria of “knowledge”. Knowledge obtained in this way was considered to be *empirical* knowledge. Webster’s New World Dictionary defines “empiricism” as “(1) relying or based solely on experiment and observation [the empirical method] rather than theory; (2) relying or based on practical experience without reference to scientific principles.” In these sentences the *sensory* nature of “experiment,” “observation”, and “practical experience” is implied and understood.

But such a limited definition of “knowledge” leaves little room for a subjective, non-sensory knowing, such as the self-evident knowledge *I am*; i.e., the knowledge of being conscious. It also does not account for the knowledge of the thoughts and images existing only in the psyche; nor does it account for what we call “spiritual” knowledge. After all, we use the words “I know” to represent an inner certainty based on the various kinds of evidence to which we have access.; and this may pertain not only to sensory phenomena perceived as objects, but also to mentally perceived phenomena as well as spiritually perceived noumena. “Knowing”, we must admit, is ultimately a subjective and intangible thing, difficult to put one’s finger on. All forms of knowledge—even that we refer to as “empirical knowledge”—exist only as ephemeral conditions within the subjective field of awareness of each individual. And all these kinds of knowledge—empirical, mental, and spiritual—are informed by the kinds of evidence appropriate to each.

Evidence, in the scientific, empirical sense, consists of sense data. This refers, usually, to that data which reaches us through the faculty of vision via the *physical eye*. Even when there is mathematical proof of a scientific theory, empirical proof

demands the confirmation of visual measurement, whether performed by the physical eye or by technological instrumentation. But there are other kinds of *knowledge*, and other faculties of vision which provide the evidence for those other kinds of knowledge. There is not only the physical vision, but also psychic vision and spiritual vision, corresponding to the physical (phenomenal) field of experience, the mental (psychological) field of experience, and the spiritual (noumenal) field of experience; and the instruments of these various kinds of vision are the physical eye, the psychic eye, and the eye of spirit. The contemporary author and mystic, Ken Wilber, has written extensively about these different faculties and instruments of vision in his book, *The Eye of Spirit* ¹, where he points out that without acknowledging these different ways of seeing and *knowing*, we are limited to a very incomplete and woefully deficient theory of knowledge; with them, we are able to account for the entire spectrum of knowable experience—physical, mental, *and* spiritual.

Now, while the criterion of *empirical* proof is objective evidence limited to sensory experience, the criterion for the ‘proof’ of dreams, imaginations, and other subjective mental phenomena is, not physical vision, but *psychic vision*. This ‘vision’ does not occur through a faculty of sense, but through a faculty of the mind, or psyche, inherent in all, and is subjectively accessible by everyone: this faculty is frequently referred to as ‘the mind’s eye’, a term we use to represent that psychic instrument of vision whereby we “see” the images which we willfully or unwillingly project upon our inner ‘screen’ as “imaginations”. It is by this inner projection that we are able to create, in an instant, whatever images we desire to enjoy within our own private screenings. In dreams, also, we see subconsciously produced images that our dreaming selves believe to be real while they are being presented to us. Some also claim to experience images in the waking state that are clairvoyant or prescient, or projected from other human sources, living or dead. All these kinds of visual experience are ‘seen’ in the mind’s eye. (*Conceptual thought* seems to be audial, however, rather than visual; bringing up the likelihood of the existence of a physical, mental, and spiritual “ear” as well.)

Spiritual vision is not obtained by means of the physical eyes, or any of the other senses, nor through the imaginative or psychic faculty referred to as “the mind’s eye”; but rather through a yet subtler faculty arising only in the higher reaches of contemplative concentration, which is usually referred to as “the spiritual eye” or “the eye of contemplation”. The spiritual eye “sees”, but without the physical sense of eyesight or the deliberate projection of mindsight. The individual’s interior awareness is lifted beyond his/her mental field of awareness, as well as beyond the awareness of worldly perceptions, as that awareness is transformed into

a timeless, spaceless awareness of identity with the limitless and eternal Consciousness from which the universe emanates. In a uniting of the separative individual consciousness with the absolute and eternal Consciousness, one's awareness transcends, not only the senses and the imaginative faculty, but the sense of self, the egocentric identity, as well, relieving the individual of the sense of a separate identity, as he becomes aware of the all-inclusive One. The individual knows this eternal Consciousness as his own, since there is no longer a separate individual identity by which he can perceive this Consciousness as other.

It is this unitive mystical experience that we must consider the only valid knowledge, proof and confirmation of the existence of God or Spirit. No other kind of vision is appropriate to this kind of knowledge. It has long been accepted as axiomatic that reason, in the form of philosophy or metaphysics, is powerless to provide a credible proof (empirical knowledge) of the existence of God, since it is limited to mental conceptions only; but God has been "seen" repeatedly in the unitive vision by the eye of Spirit. It should therefore be widely understood and accepted that the only self-evident knowledge and indubitable proof of God, the eternal Self, is the direct unitive vision. For those who fail of that, there is faith, a trust in the validity of the experience of others.

The unitive 'vision' bears with it a unique kind of clarity, possessing an unmistakable and indelible stamp of truth, that does not accompany the mere physical or psychic kinds of vision. If it fails of the established standard for "knowing", then it must itself replace that standard, for it is the very essence of *knowing*. However, insofar as I know, it is a knowledge that is non-transmittable, and therefore undemonstrable. It may (with difficulty) be verbally described, but that scarcely constitutes the actual 'knowledge' itself. The direct knowledge is obtainable only via the eye of Spirit. It should immediately be added that the unitive vision must never be regarded by its recipient as a matter of pride, for it is not a deed to which the individual may lay claim. Such experience is brought about entirely by the One in whom the individual exists. The individual is not meritorious in experiencing the unitive vision; rather, he is illumined despite himself. He is drawn as if by a magnet to the experience by the power of the greater Self, and, as a dream-character in a dream is dissolved in the waking consciousness of the dreamer, his sense of a separate selfhood (ego) is likewise dissolved in the eternally wakeful Consciousness of the One in whom he lives and moves and has his being. The One alone has absolute being, and alone has the power of self-revelation. It is that One who is seen, and it is that One who sees Himself in that unitive vision. Ultimately, no other may truly be said to exist but that One who exists absolutely and forever.

Many have experienced the unitive vision who have never sought it. It comes, at times, when least expected, during moments of introspective reflection, or when viewing a restful scene, or while feeling especially content or joyful. If the individual so illumined is fortunate, that unitive vision will take up perhaps twenty minutes of his life. But, for the rest of his life, his mind will hover about that vision, as a moth about a flame, in search of a continual clarification of the illuminative understanding obtained in that fleeting vision. It is in this way that he revisits the unitive vision, basking in the contemplation of the One who illumined his heart. There he finds the adoration, the bliss, and the sweet wisdom which that Self revealed to him, ever living and ever new. It is not just a memory, but it is a lasting presence in his life, benefiting him every moment, and also shedding some benefit to others whom he touches with his words. That vision is a lifelong treasure, filling his mind with a never-failing fountain of love and happiness and the brightest consolations of wisdom. Though to the world he appears empty and alone, he possesses within himself the fullness of the universe, and his solitude is the blissful aloneness of the only One.

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NOTE:

1. Ken Wilber, *The Eye of Spirit*, Boulder, Colorado, Shambhala, 2001.

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23. Can We Ever Really Know For Sure? (3-31-2015)

Imagine you have experienced the sudden transformation of your self-awareness to that of an all-embracing universal awareness. You have become united somehow with the universal Consciousness usually referred to as 'God'. In that transformed awareness, you make note of the radical changes in perspective that have occurred within you in the belief that these notes will be useful as a referential record of that transcendent universal awareness. And, of course, they would be useful—that is, if even for a second anyone believed you! And that's the trouble with subjective psychological events—even divine ones: they are unverifiable. This is why only

empirical, i.e., sensually perceptible and demonstrable, facts are acceptable as *science*. Assertions based on subjective *gnosis*, however factually valid they may be for the one who experienced that *gnosis*, must remain, for everyone else, indeterminate at best. Declarations based on subjective experience will always be subject to doubt.

Mystical realizations, however frequent and however similar throughout human history, can never be successfully determined by others to be either fact or fiction; reported experiences of a mystical nature are therefore generally regarded as unsubstantiated. Even a person well-known for their veracity and integrity will be suspected of mental delusion at best, and deliberate prevarication at worst. Even close friends and family of the mystic will regard the account of his experiences as unbelievable. To those who have never experienced such a radical transformation of their consciousness, the mystic's claims have to seem totally incredible. Every mystical account must be judged individually, of course; but in the end it is only those who have had some experience of the divine in their own lives who will be capable of recognizing the validity or invalidity of a mystic's declarations.

The truth is that you will never really know for sure until you know by your *own* experience, through your own self-inquiry; through your own devotion to the search for truth, and the revelations you experience within yourself. If the recorded revelations of the mystic have any relevant value to others, it is only as a means of fostering that introspection in others which can lead to the possibility of their own experience of divine Truth within themselves. Only when that revelation occurs to *you* will you *really* know for yourself. And that knowledge will be certain and undeniable—even if not another single soul believes you! And if, despite the widespread disbelief of family, friends and peers, you nonetheless love to tell of it, to shout it from the rooftops, you may be sure that this too is your divinely appointed prerogative.

* * *

24. A Gift To Be Shared

(9-22-2016)

I think that everyone realizes that we all live within a self-imposed illusion in which our perspective on the world is entirely self-centered. Each of us is the center of our own world, the subjective focal point round which everything else turns. My experience is different from your experience; yours is different from mine. And, while we can verbally share our experiences and our perspectives with one another—since they are not personally acquired—they remain mere hearsay, and do not affect us in the same way that *personal* experiences do.

Despite this acknowledged incommunicability of personal experiences, I have spent a good portion of my life attempting to convey to others some sense of an experience of my own that I feel has some real importance for everyone, and therefore needs to be communicated.¹ It is an experience that occurred to me nearly fifty years ago, and yet it is a timeless one, in that it was an experience of eternity itself. Strangely enough, I had vowed to God to give pronouncement to this experience even before it was given to me: “Let me be one with Thee,” I prayed, “not that I might glory in Thy love, but that I might speak out in Thy praise and to Thy glory, for the benefit of all Thy children.” I can only explain the uncharacteristic selflessness of this prayer as being itself the work of God. And, of course, since God granted my request, you can well understand that I am not only obligated but am resolutely committed to praising God in His glory for your benefit, and for the benefit of everyone.

I am well aware that it is as true today as it was in the time of Jesus and the time of Plotinus that the great majority of the people are ignorant of the existence of such mystical experience. Despite the many learned studies and the many available accounts of mystical experience by well-reputed people throughout the ages, the ignorant majority of the people remain as ignorant as before. Why is this so? It is so because the people comprising the ignorant majority do not have personal knowledge of mystical experience in their own lives and are therefore extremely reluctant to believe that such experiences are possible or relevant to their own lives. I understand this well, as I was once a member of that ignorant majority. And yet, today, I would say to that majority: the very fact that a few souls have experienced divine revelations *does* have a major relevance to your own lives. Mystical experience is a revelation of the nature of the reality in which all of us live. It is as relevant to you as it is to those who are the direct recipients of that experience.

His gracious gift to me of mystical vision was undoubtedly meant for all of us. It was a rare gift of the knowledge that this world is His own, that you are His own, that nothing in the universe is outside of His divine domain; that if we can fully comprehend this truth, we will be able to see His love and His wisdom in all that is created and know His blissful presence in our own lives. For He is the air that fills our lungs; He is the awareness that allows us to experience and to know; He is the kindness that overflows in our hearts. Open your mind to Him, and know the unlimited wonder and joy of being, for your being is *His* being; your being is the expression of His infinite love.

This God-given vision was my own personal experience, to be sure, but I ask you to please accept my experience as your own. It is His wish, and therefore it is my wish as well, that you come to know Him in yourself. Look to Him for all that you wish for in this life, and you will be fulfilled beyond your wildest dreams. And, if you are very fortunate, He may also grant to you, as He did to me, the vision of your timeless divinity in Him. So, may it be.

* * *

NOTES:

1. If you would like to read a detailed account of my experience of God, please see my book, *The Supreme Self*, available on my website as a free download at: www.themysticsvision.com/Downloads.

* * *

12. If I Told You (3-28-14)

If I told you that you are the one source of this universe and all beings in it, what knowledge would you have gained?

If I told you that you are the divine Self of the entire universe, you would be no wiser than before.

Words cannot reveal the truth to you; Self-knowledge is not made of words.

You will know the truth when it is revealed within, when the Self reveals itself, and not before.

All my words can do is encourage you to look, to search, to examine who you are at your subtlest core.

If the truth is to be found, it will be found in quietude at the highest reaches of your heart and soul;
 When you have surrendered yourself to the Self of all and received the blessing of God,
 Then you will know the truth of who you are. Then alone will you know the truth of who you are.

* * *

26. Blessedness (6-15-2016)

It is evident to everyone that God is adept at concealing Himself;
 But few people know that He also reveals Himself—and yet He does!
 He reveals Himself in those who love Him and whose hearts are pure.
 Since He is in all creatures, He is easily able to reveal His inner presence
 In those whom He finds worthy. Those to whom He reveals Himself
 Awaken to the knowledge that they and all things are made of God,
 That He alone constitutes the being of all things in the universe.

Prior to that awakening, these people had no idea that they were God's Manifestations. They thought they were individual beings
 Alone in the Universe. They didn't understand that one omnipotent Power
 Fills all creatures and all things; that He alone exists in every form.
 If He has not yet revealed Himself in you, pray to Him for His merciful Grace.
 Let Him know your loneliness without Him. For truly, without the
 Knowledge of His eternal presence, you are lost, even if you know it not.
 To know Him as your essence, to know Him as your very identity
 And breath, will so fill your heart with joy and wisdom that you will think of Him
 Every moment and see Him in every thing and event on earth.
 You will sing His praise in your heart and delight in the divine beauty
 All around you in His world. This blessing is the true Kingdom of God
 In which the blessed live forevermore. May He grant this blessing to you.

* * *

27. Conclusions (from *Body And Soul*, 2012; rev. 8-23-2017)

Any conclusions that we may draw regarding the Divine reality must necessarily be nothing more than mere theories made of word-symbols, bearing only a vague resemblance to the reality Itself. With that in mind, let me share with you my conclusions, my theories:

1. The Universe

We have seen that the Judaic tradition, and by extension the Christian tradition, asserts that the Spirit, or Soul, was infused in man by the enlivening breath of God.¹ Early philosophers, including Plato and Plotinus, held that the One “emanated” or “radiated” the Divine Mind as its organizational functionary, which in turn “emanated” an all-pervading Soul. They described that divine Soul as permeating the material universe as light or smoke permeates the atmosphere. To this day, these age-old concepts constitute the framework of our theology and the imagery of our religious imagination. Our minds continue even now to operate in these established patterns, utilizing these ancient conceptualizations, to which we have become habituated for so long.

But, I would submit, there is another, perhaps more accurate, way of viewing the permeation of matter by God's Spirit, not as an “inspiration” or “emanation”, but rather as a ‘containment’: Consider how our own individual consciousness permeates our thoughts and dream-images. Our thoughts and mental images are permeated by our consciousness because these thoughts and dreams are contained *within* our minds. May we not conclude that, likewise, the Spirit, the all-pervading Consciousness, permeates the universe because the universe is contained *within It*? After all, where else could the creations of a divine Spirit exist but *within Itself*?

Every mystical theology holds that the individual self is in fact identical to the universal Self; that the Spirit within is synonymous with the transcendent Spirit and can be realized as such. We must ask ourselves how that is possible unless we—and in fact, the whole universe—are within the divine Spirit. But we are inclined rather to think that ‘God, the divine Spirit, is within us’, as though He were a trillion separate homunculi hiding in each individual heart. No, He pervades all because all is *within* Him. This universe and all within it is a figment of *His* imagination. He is the only one who is. All these forms and all these “I’s” exist within that one infinite Mind.²

If the Divine Spirit, or Soul, was *infused* into the material universe as Plotinus asserts, permeating, pervading, and guiding every wave-particle, what kind of entity would that be? We cannot even conceive of anything that might have the properties that would allow it to enter into, permeate, vivify and awaken to consciousness a material body. But, if the entire universe consisted of the Thought-images of a Divine Mind, then that universe must exist only within that Divine Mind and be permeated by that conscious Divine Mind—just as our own thought-forms are permeated by our own conscious minds in which they are created and in which they are contained.

‘But how,’ we must wonder, ‘could so physically substantial a universe be a mere imagination, a Mind-born projection of Thought?’ An answer might be found in the recent results of science’s investigation into the nature of matter. The science of physics, for all its denial of the supernatural reality, has done more in the last one hundred years to dispel the notion of the substantiality of the material world than all the theologians throughout history. During that time, the discoveries of physicists have reminded us of the declarations of the Upanishads that the appearance of matter, i.e., the phenomenal universe, is an illusion, a product of Maya, the creative power of the One (*Brahman*). Contemporary science has shown that the universe does indeed consist of an Energy that transforms into material particles; but these material particles are really nothing more than submicroscopic electromagnetic impulses, mere ‘points of Energy’, interacting in such a way that the appearance of substance is produced—forming, in other words, an illusory world.

How do these “points” of Energy, these so-called ‘wave-particles’ that began as “photons” of light, manage to produce the illusion of form and substance? These photons were produced in such quantity and intensive activity that the energetic collisions of these photons produced particles such as electrons, and quarks—which combine to form protons and neutrons—which combine to form atoms; and the atoms combine to form molecules, which combine in vast numbers to form perceptible gases, liquids, and solids in a variety of sizes and configurations. The elementary ‘particles’ themselves are unimaginably tiny: according to the physicists of the Large Hadron Collider at CERN, “protons are 100,000 times smaller than the simplest atom, hydrogen; and quarks are 10,000 times smaller than protons. For comparison, if a hydrogen atom were six miles across, a quark would still measure less than four-thousandths of an inch.”³

Clearly, the atoms of which these perceivable solids consist are mostly empty space in their interior. In fact, physicists tell us that all of what we call *Matter* is

99.999999999999999 percent empty space; the other infinitesimal part seems to be nothing more than energy wavelets and intangible forces. Subatomic wave-particles consist of intangible electromagnetically charged impulses held in proximate “orbits” about one another by invisible forces, so as to form the appearance of much grander substantial entities. And these appearances are multiplied in infinite profusion and variety as if by some magician’s hand, to appear before our eyes as a multitudinous world of objects. And so, this material world, this phenomenal reality of ours, is a marvelous magic show of truly immense proportions!

This Light—these particles and forces—what a marvelous universe they make! How real and substantial it all seems! A burst of Light, and all congeals into a universe of form and color, intelligence and emotion, *sturm und drang*. Time drags the whole process out, making it all seem quite natural, making it seem, from the perspectives of our individual lives, a long and gradual evolution. But, if we were to see the fourteen billion years of evolutionary history reduced to just a few seconds, it would become clear that it is a Mind-born creation, an instantaneous imagination from beginning to end. From God’s eternal perspective, all is accomplished in an instant.

The Light-energy by which God forms the universe is simply the substance of His Thought—or what is analogous to Thought in a Divine Mind. Simply because we have identified a whole array of different ‘wave-particles’ that make up the material world does not mean that these constituent entities are really separate substantial ‘things’ in themselves. We have simply given names to the impulses and forces inherent in God’s Light-illusion, as one might examine and give names to the cohesive thought-constituents within a dream. This world-appearance does indeed seem substantial; but it is God’s illusion—as the circle produced by a whirling flame is an illusion. And in the aggregate of trillions of these illusory wave-particles, a larger, more complex, visual illusion is produced—which, by reflecting billions of photons onto our retinas, produces an electrical impulse in our brains, which in turn produces an image to our conscious minds; while the gentle forces produced by the motion of electrons presents a tactile sensation in another section of our brains, and is interpreted in our minds as the sensation of touch, confirming our impression of substantial form. But it is only a marvelous masquerade of light—God’s light; and it is all His grand illusion.

There is one Consciousness. It is the Consciousness of the One Being. And all the manifested universe exists within that one Consciousness. The various objects of this manifested universe move and operate, not by individual forces or laws of

physics, but in and by the intentional Will of that One. Immersed in that one Consciousness, united with it, one sees that: “all things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.” Who, then, is doing what? In Him we live and move. In Him one Will operates throughout. And we, mere dust motes dancing in His sunbeam, are swallowed and encompassed in His light. Look within and see the Truth.

2. The One

We may conceive of the Divine Mind, producer of the universe of light; but we cannot imagine It without stipulating that it draws Its own conscious power from the unlimited Consciousness in which It exists. For the Divine Mind is not an entity separate from the One Absolute; it is the functioning creative power of the One Consciousness, operating within that One, and lending being, consciousness and bliss to all that arises from it. However, of the One, the Absolute—also designated as the Void, Brahman, the Tao, the Godhead—we cannot speak. It is beyond even our ability to frame in our imagination.

We certainly may not ascribe to the One any descriptive characteristics, since the One transcends whatever characteristics we may attribute to It; and yet the Vedantic characterization of the One (*Brahman*) as *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, “Existence-Consciousness-Bliss”, seems unavoidable and undeniable. That infinite sky must certainly be regarded as the ultimate Source of all existence, all consciousness, and all bliss. Those who have experienced It directly speak of It as ‘the Father’. It is the Fountainhead and Witness of all that is, the unwavering Foundation-stone upon which we stand. It never rests or sleeps, but is an ever-wakeful, unblinking Eye that remains eternally vigilant, watching over all.

That unborn Source of consciousness is beyond time and space, and all manifestation; yet It is the eternal Identity of all that exists. It transcends the universe, while constituting its essence—as a dreaming mind transcends its dream-images, while constituting their essence. Consciousness is not the property of matter, or of any individual being. It is not produced by any material process; but rather is a Divine stream of Intelligence filling the entire universe. It is the fundamental nature of Being, the foundation of the phenomenal universe, and the light of awareness filling it. We are able to know it by following our own consciousness back to its Source, where we are able to discover our original Self. That Self is the One Consciousness. He is the one Source of the material universe and He is also the life and awareness pervading it. But, of course, we must see Him for ourselves. Our soul/mind must be illumined by the eternal Light itself, and

drawn into Its hidden depths. To obtain that grace, all men focus their minds on Him through prayer and contemplative longing, and He shines His Light on whom He will.

3. The Soul

What we regard as our “soul” derives its existence, its consciousness, and its inherent bliss from the Divine Mind in whom it exists. When the soul comes to realize its Divine identity, it knows with absolute certainty that its physical existence is rooted in the creative Power of the One; it knows that its consciousness is grounded in the Consciousness of the One; it experiences bliss only insofar as it is drawn by Grace into likeness with the One, and it is imbued with bliss as a result of the influx of that divine consciousness.

Each individual soul is confined to a body that defines the extent of its individual being in the spatio-temporal universe. We regard what is not within that limitation as “outside” of us. But God has no body or any limit to His extent. There is no “outside” of Him; even if He were to create an outside, it would be within Him. God is an infinite, eternal Mind. He transcends space and time. Space and time are His creations, and they exist within Him. *Whatever* He creates is within Him. We, and the entire universe, exist within Him. Our own minds are limited; each one has its own perspective and considers itself to be the “subject”; and what is external to it is regarded as the “object”. But in the eternal Consciousness, subject and object are one. That One is unlimited and undivided; It pervades everything and everyone.

We must understand that the separation of body and soul, of Matter and Spirit, exists only in the temporal world of appearance. In the Eternal, this duality, this separation, does not exist. In the One, they are indistinguishable. Like water and ice in a glass, they are separable in appearance though they are one in essence. Those who have ‘seen’ into their own eternal reality have realized that both the subtle Soul, containing life and consciousness, and the Energy constituting gross Matter, are together contained within the one Divinity. This is why the mystic, experiencing his identification with the Divine, experiences his all-pervading Self, not simply as Soul, but as an illimitable awareness that is *both* universal Soul *and* universal Matter. Matter and Soul are both contained within the Divine Being. The unmanifest Light and the manifested Light together form all that is. Ultimately, they are one eternal Reality.

We are made of the Consciousness and Energy of the Eternal. His Consciousness manifests as Soul, and His Energy is sent forth to establish the material universe at the 'Big Bang', 'Big Burst', 'Great Radiance', or whatever you wish to call it. And the ultimately true Origin, Source, and *initiator* of that field of Consciousness and Energy, is the One. All that exists is His. It is His projection, His exuberant radiance. Nothing else exists but that One. Our sense of 'I' too is Him. 'I' am the one and only 'I' that is. My consciousness is His consciousness. My body, as well as the whole universe, is His manifest form. I and the Father are one. A personage in a dream is not only permeated with the consciousness of the dreamer, he is *made of* the consciousness of the dreamer. He is essentially *identical* with the consciousness of the dreamer. In just the same way, we are not only permeated by God's Consciousness, we are *made of* His essence; we are projections of His light. And our consciousness is essentially identical with the Consciousness of God.

Our bodies are His light-forms, and we are animated and made conscious by the all-pervading presence of His living Consciousness. When we look within ourselves, we discover that we are that one Consciousness-Energy. For, just as a dream-person looking within to inquire who he is would discover that he is in fact the dreamer, so do we, inquiring within, discover that we are the limitless One in whom all things and all beings exist. If you ask a beam of sunlight, "Who are you?" it will answer, "I am the Sun." If you ask a wave on the sea, "Who are you?" it will answer, "I am the ocean." If you ask a soul, "Who are you?" it must answer, "I am the One in all. I am He who alone exists now and forever. I am the light of the one Sun; I am a wave on the one Sea; I am a living breath of the one Life. I am in all that is seen or unseen. I am the One in all."

Jesus said, "I am the Light that is over all things. I am all: From me all has come forth, and to me all returns. Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."⁴

Unfortunately, many believe that this is a truth that applies only to the one unique historical figure of Jesus; but it is a *universal truth*, a truth for all, and a truth to be realized: *I* am not merely this body, not just this spark of consciousness, nor merely the entire manifested universe; I am the Source of the universe, and the universe itself. I am both the subject and the object. There is nothing else here but I AM. This is realized in the mystic's vision. Listen to what the great Shankaracharya said:

The fool thinks, 'I am the body'. The intelligent man thinks, 'I am an individual soul united with the body'. But the wise man, in the

greatness of his knowledge and spiritual discrimination, sees the Self as [the only] reality, and thinks, 'I am Brahman'.⁵

I am that Brahman, one without a second, the ground of all existences. I make all things manifest. I give form to all things. I am within all things, yet nothing can taint me.

I am eternal, pure, unchangeable, absolute.

I am that Brahman, one without a second. Maya, the many-seeming, is merged in me. I am beyond the grasp of thought, the essence of all things. I am the truth. I am knowledge. I am infinite. I am absolute bliss.

I am beyond action; [I am] the reality which cannot change. I have neither part nor form. I am absolute. I am eternal. Nothing sustains me, I stand alone. I am one without a second.

I am the soul of the universe. I am all things, and above all things. I am one without a second. I am pure consciousness, single and universal. I am joy. I am life everlasting.⁶

You and I—we are alive in God. Become awake and sense Him—within you, around you, constituting your body and your awareness, the earth, the heavens. This ocean of existence is His. Nothing exists outside of God. To know God is to know one's Self. It is to know the originating Mind of the Father, the One. It is to know the Source of all existence, the Source of all consciousness, and the Source of all bliss. What will you do with this knowledge? Praise Him in your thoughts, and in your words and in your actions. Find your delight in Him—seeing only Him, loving only Him, praising only Him. But we cannot even use the word "Him". We cannot speak of God in the third person, for who would be the third? Even the two—"I" and "Thou"—is an illusion, a false duality that will be dissolved when the one eternal Identity is revealed.

These are my conclusions, based on my own experience; but you must come to your own conclusions, from your own experience. The truth is confirmable only by direct experience—not by a majority consensus, not by rational deliberation, not by reliance on scriptures, not by scientific proofs. The truth of your eternal Source and Identity is known for certain only when His grace reveals it to you. Therefore, gather all the strength of your mind and heart and focus it on Him without

interruption for as long and as often as possible. Others have succeeded in this endeavor; and so can you.

4. Postscript

On the evening of November 18, 1966, I prayed to God: “Let me be one with Thee; not that I might glory in Thy love, but that I might speak out in Thy praise and to Thy glory for the benefit of all Thy children.” Immediately, this soul became irradiated with His Light, making it one with Him; and these words came forth from that unutterable Height as a gracious gift that, I believe, was meant to be shared with everyone:

“O my God, even this body is Thine own!
Though I call to Thee and seek Thee amidst chaos,
Even I who seemed an unclean pitcher amidst Thy waters —
Even I am Thine own.

Does a wave cease to be of the ocean?
Do the mountains and the gulfs cease to be of the earth?
Or does a pebble cease to be stone?
How can I escape Thee?
Thou art even That which thinks of escape!

Even now, I speak the word, “Thou”, and create duality;
I love, and create hatred;
I am in peace, and am fashioning chaos;
Standing on the peak, I necessitate the depths.

But now, weeping and laughing are gone;
Night is become day;
Music and silence are heard as one;
My ears are all the universe.

All motion has ceased; everything continues.
Life and death no longer stand apart.
No I, no Thou; no now, or then.
Unless I move, there is no stillness.

Nothing to lament, nothing to vanquish,
Nothing to pride oneself on;
All is accomplished in an instant.

All may now be told without effort.
 Where is there a question?
 Where is the temple?
 Which the Imperishable, which the abode? ⁷

I am the pulse of the turtle;
 I am the clanging bells of joy.
 I bring the dust of blindness;
 I am the fire of song.
 I am in the clouds and in the gritty soil;
 In pools of clear water my image is found.

I am the dust on the feet of the wretched,
 The toothless beggars of every land.
 I have given sweets that decay to those that crave them;
 I have given my wealth unto the poor and lonely.
 My hands are open— nothing is concealed.

All things move together of one accord;
 Assent is given throughout the universe to every
 falling grain.
 The Sun stirs the waters of my heart,
 And the vapor of my love flies to the four corners
 of the world;
 The moon stills me, and the cold darkness is my bed.

I have but breathed, and everything is rearranged and set in order once
 again.
 A million worlds begin and end in every breath,
 And in this breathing, all things are sustained.”

These words were written during the time I was drawn into union with the Mind of the Creator, and they reflect the progression from a dualistic perspective to an utterly unitive one. For these many years thereafter, I have enjoyed an enhanced sense of the Divinity within me and surrounding me; but I have not ascended to that unitive state again since that time. Often, I have attempted to express the knowledge I had received, and found, as many others have found, that to describe the knowledge acquired is not so easy as it might at first appear. It seems that, no matter what approach one takes, the experience not only refuses to fit into words,

but refuses even to be accurately formulated in the mind. What was clear in that rare awareness is less clear in retrospect.

Nevertheless, over these many years, I have undertaken to share the certain knowledge given to me since the day I made that bargain with God. He fulfilled His part of the bargain, and I have endeavored since that time to carry out my promise. I have written many books telling of His presence as the eternal Self of all, and of His greatness and goodness, in the hopes that others might be benefited thereby. Whether or not I have succeeded, I leave to His judgment. I believe that, with this last book, I've reached the culmination of my attempts over the years to express this knowledge; I am advancing in age, and besides, there is little more to add. And while it has become evident to me that, in this current Dark Age, there is little interest in what I have to tell, I feel a duty to publish this book in the faith that God will preserve it and bring it to the aid and comfort of the handful of evolved seekers who are to come in a brighter age.

* * *

NOTES:

1. Book of Genesis 2:7, Old Testament of the Bible.
2. That the universe is in God is hardly a new idea. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (written circa 500 B.C.E.), the Lord, Krishna, says, "By Me, in my unmanifested form, are all things in this universe pervaded. All beings exist in Me; I do not exist in them." (*Bhagavad Gita*: 9:4); and in the Christian scriptures, the apostle Paul says, "In Him we live and move and have our being." (*Acts* 17:28). The entire universe exists within God. He produces the appearance of universal matter from Himself, within Himself. And while it appears that the Spirit and matter are two substances intermingled, it is all only Himself, and so He remains one Being forever. He empowers the universal appearance within Himself, and the dynamic universe continually evolves to more fully express the glory of His Being.
3. "Large Hadron Collider could reveal our origins", April 19, 2010 by Roger S. Boyd, copyright 2010 McClatchy-Tribune Information Services; appeared April 19, 2010 in PhysOrg Newsletter, www.physorg.com/news190869267.html.
4. Saying of Jesus, in *The Gospel of Thomas*, 77.
5. Shankaracharya, *The Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*, trans. by Swami Prabhavananda & Christopher Isherwood, Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1947; p. 58.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 118.1.
7. This truth is attested to by Dattatreya in the *Avadhut Gita*, Ch. 6:14: "If there's only the limitless One, all is Shiva. How, then, can one distinguish between the perishable and the Imperishable?"

* * *

28. Personal Spiritual Experience (8-27-2016)

Mysticism is a metaphysical perspective based on personal spiritual experience. That perspective is informed by the knowledge of the experience of previous mystics but is not dependent upon that knowledge. It is dependent upon the direct personal revelation of God in the soul. Strangely enough, however, personal spiritual experience is quite alien to the normal modern Western religious sensibility. Once, several years ago, when I asked a group of students associated with a Protestant Christian organization to speak individually of their personal spiritual experience, each of them, without exception, offered a list of the various churches to which they had belonged over the years. They had no concept of what a 'spiritual experience' was.¹

It's not necessary to accept the doctrines of any established religion in order to have a personal spiritual experience. It is only necessary to be openly receptive to God in your soul. He is the Ground of everyone's existence, and the sole Savior of all His children. Pray to Him in your heart of hearts, and He will hear. In every age, however, it seems that there are very few who seek Him wholeheartedly. This was the case at the time that Jesus lived as well. Young men studied the Torah and memorized the verses which they were instructed to memorize. But few actually sought to have personal knowledge of God in their own lives. Jesus was one of those very exceptional persons who opened his heart to God with a pure love, and God graced him by revealing His eternal presence. The life of Jesus was thereafter filled with much personal spiritual experience: the divine light enveloped him and revealed to him the knowledge of his innate divinity.

In ancient India, it was the enlightening personal spiritual experience of the *rishis* that inspired them to write the Upanishads. The Buddha too became enlightened through personal spiritual experience. He meditated deeply upon the mystery of his own nature until at last the truth of his divine nature was revealed to him. Muhammad also knew personal spiritual experience; it was through that experience that he became filled with love for God and was inspired by Him to write his inner realizations for the benefit of his people.

Do you think you are less than these men? God lives in you as well, and only awaits the turning of your gaze to Him in order to fill you with the wonder of His glorious presence in your life. Exceptional people are not content with mere beliefs based on hearsay but seek to know God directly through their own personal spiritual experience. Know that you are His own. Give your heart and your life to

Him, and He will surely illumine you with His merciful Grace, invigorating your life with the blissful knowledge of your divine and all-pervading Self. This is the blessing He bestowed on me, and this is the blessing I wish for you.

* * *

NOTE:

1. Personal spiritual experience was once a cornerstone of the Christian Church, but after the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, there was a trend away from a theocentric focus in the Church to a more anthropocentric focus, and this resulted in fewer instances of personal spiritual experience within the Christian tradition. This, in turn, resulted in a sort of cultural agnosticism within a more secular society in the West. Today, therefore, *Mysticism* is much more associated with the Eastern religious traditions that have retained much of their theocentric focus.

* * *

29. Stanley And The Enchanted Forest (9-15-2015)

So many mystical writers over the centuries have attempted to describe the nature of our world—its source, its beginning, its purpose, its meaning; and they have succeeded only in creating a fog of words by which the truth is effectively obscured or concealed. I don't pretend to be able to offer a clearer picture; words are so ill-suited to the purpose of illustration that one searches in vain for a worthy phrase or label that paints a simple and accurate picture of what is. In fact, no such label or phrase actually exists. The sound of a word is nothing like the vision that enters the eyes, or the wisdom that enlightens the heart. So, what is one to do who wishes so earnestly to tell the truth that's been revealed? I have asked the Lord to help me, and the following true story is the result:

Once upon a time, there was a young man known as Stanley who lived in a little cabin in a beautiful enchanted forest. Stanley felt a deep love for God, and that love shone clearly on his face and gave happiness to everyone who met him. But Stanley was not content to impress others with his love; he wanted more than anything to know God, to become one with Him. And so, one night, while sitting by his cast iron stove, gazing through the grate at the glowing embers within, he prayed to God, “Dear Father, let me know Thee, not that I might glory in Thy love, but that I might speak out in Thy praise, and to Thy glory, for the benefit of all Thy children.” And God, who hears every sincere prayer, looked down on Stanley and immediately granted his prayer.

Realizing that something in him had changed, Stanley sat up with a start, and said, “O my God, even this body is Thine own!” God had revealed to Stanley that every inch of his body was made of the universal substance of God Himself.

Stanley said, “I had been told that Thou wert within me, and also outside of me, but I was blind to Thy presence, and thought that perhaps even if Thou wert within and without, like water in a submerged pitcher, I, the pitcher, was still something separate from Thee—but now I see that even *I* am Thine own.”

“Is a wave separate from the ocean? Is a mountain or a canyon separate from the earth? Is a pebble something other than stone? Thou art everything—without exception, and there is no way to escape from Thy Being. Thou art even the thought that thinks of escape!”

“Even now,” said Stanley, if I speak the word, “Thou”, I create two—an I and a Thou— where Thou hast revealed there is only one Being. All of the pairs of opposites are created in this way: if I love one condition, I hate its contrary. If I am

silent, there must also be speech. If I stand on the highest peak, there must also be the lowest depths. It is I who create these separate pairs of opposites by the activity of my mind.”

Suddenly Stanley became aware that all the contraries that once filled his mind had now vanished, and he said:

“But now, weeping and laughing are gone;
Night is become day;
Music and silence are heard as one,
My ears are all the universe.”

Stanley’s mind had become concentrated on the omnipresence of God, and all contraries were resolved in the calm awareness of the undivided One. In that moment, Stanley was aware that, while the entire universe continued its unthinkably complex activity, the One remained unmoving, unchanged.

“All motion has ceased,” he said; “yet everything continues.
Life and death no longer stand apart.”

Stanley was no longer regarding himself as a mortal human being in this immense universe; he knew himself as the Eternal One. No longer was there a God to speak to:

“No I, no Thou;
No now, or then.
Unless I move, there is no stillness.”

Experiencing in himself an eternally undivided unity, he saw that everything was perfect, and everything that occurred was done to perfection.

“Nothing to lament, nothing to vanquish,
Nothing to pride oneself on,” he said;
“All is accomplished in an instant.”

It suddenly occurred to Stanley that he was seeing everything, even the subtlest realities, very clearly, and that he was in a unique position to explain all of the mysteries of existence:

“All may now be told without effort,” he said.

But he could find no mystery that needed solving; everything was perfectly and clearly obvious. “Where is there a question?”

And then he thought, 'I shall tell about the soul and the bodily temple that contains it.' But, again, there was nothing to tell.

"Where is the temple?

Which the Imperishable (soul), which the abode?"

Stanley searched, but all duality had vanished. There was only the one Self appearing as all. It was the very life-pulse of all creatures; it was the uprising joy that gave meaning and satisfaction to all lives; and it was the bringer of ignorance, and the exultation that urges us to song. Stanley was urged to sing of that all-pervading Self which he clearly was:

"I am the pulse of the turtle;

I am the clanging bells of joy.

I bring the dust of blindness;

I am the fire of song."

And Stanley saw that he was everywhere. He was the one existence that lived in all things.

"I am in the clouds and in the gritty soil," he sang;

"In pools of clear water my image is found."

And he could see that the life of all beings was his own, and that each person received the fruits of their desires:

"I am the dust on the feet of the wretched,

The toothless beggars of every land.

I have given sweets that decay to those that crave them;

I have given my wealth unto the poor and lonely.

My hands are open—nothing is concealed."

And Stanley saw that within this one infinite existence,

"All things move together of one accord;

Assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain."

He saw that, in every place, all things are interconnected; that, even in the depths of the ocean floor, the movement of a floating grain of sand has its place in the coordination of the whole. That coordination he saw also in the revolutions of the earth around the Sun:

"The Sun stirs the waters of my heart,

And the vapor of my love flies to the four corners of the world;

The moon stills me, and the cold darkness is my bed."

Stanley was no more; there was only the eternal Creator and Mover, breathing forth the universe in a recurrent cycle of becoming and ending.

With solemn certainty, he said:

“I have but breathed, and everything is rearranged

And set in order once again.

A million worlds begin and end in every breath,

And in this breathing, all things are sustained.”

The following morning, when Stanley awoke, he immediately recalled the experience of the night before, and he went to his front door, and opened it. Kneeling down, he gathered up a few pebbles of gravel in his hand. “I am in this?” he asked. Could what he had experienced be true? And where had that enchanting realm that he had experienced the night before disappeared to?

Stanley felt as though he had been thrust back into a dream from which he had no power to awaken. His only thought was to return to that state he had known the night before. He rushed outside and up the twisted road, scrambling up the hill to the cliff on top of the world, above the forest and ocean, where he had often conversed with God; and he sat there, out of breath, praying, with tears running down his cheeks, for God to take him back into Himself. Before long, a chill blanket of gray fog, which had risen up from the ocean below, swept over him, engulfing him in a misty cloud. And after a few moments, Stanley reluctantly went back, down the mountain.

Stanley lived for many years thereafter, but he never experienced that timeless realm again. Nonetheless, during that night in the enchanted forest, he had been thoroughly transformed. He was never the same again. He had been given an enlightening knowledge that affected his vision of the world and himself forever thereafter and instilled in him a lasting certainty that was never more than a flutter of an eyelid away. He always held to the knowledge that God alone exists—in his surroundings, in himself, and in the guidance and movement of all that exists. Only rarely did Stanley experience an intensely clarified awareness of God’s presence, but he longed for it constantly. As he grew older, Stanley never wavered in the clarity of his intellect and his spiritual perception; for so long as God granted him the capability of remembering Him, he was filled every day with an upsurging of loving gratitude and freedom from care that was invincible. His knowledge of God’s unfailing presence remained as strong and certain as ever, and he lived consciously, confidently, in His merciful grace.

30. Which The Imperishable, Which The Abode? (11-01-2016)

When I was a young man, I was accustomed to thinking of the body and the soul as two wholly separate and different realities: I considered the soul to be the imperishable Spirit in the body, and the body to be the perishable “temple” or “abode” of the soul. But then, God granted me His vision, allowing me to see from His divine perspective. And when I searched within the divine Spirit for the division between the body and the soul, I could see no division, and I wondered about it: “Where is the temple?” I asked; “Which the Imperishable, which the abode?” But, in the One, there was no such distinction to be seen. Everything in the universe—including my own body—was seen to be made of God. There was no “temple”, no “abode of the Spirit”; there was only the one Spirit, comprising all. He alone is everywhere, existing in and *as* everything. What I had considered to be ‘my’ body, was made entirely of His creative Light, and was therefore really God’s body. “O my God”, I exclaimed; “even this body is Thine own!”.¹

I think most of us tend to regard only our incorporeal souls as divine, as imperishable, for our bodies clearly are not imperishable. When someone dies, do we not witness the decay of their lifeless bodies? But *consider*: though our bodies perish, *that* of which our bodies are made *is* imperishable. In the final analysis, all bodies are made of God’s Light, and at the world’s end, when the earth along with the whole universe dissolves, everything (including the physical particles remaining from all interred or cremated bodies) will transform back into that divine Light from whence it came. Just as God, the transcendent Spirit, is imperishable, His Light of which all the universe is comprised is also imperishable.² God and His creative Light are one and the same.

And so, though we tend to identify our individual selves with the bodies we inhabit, we must know for certain that our individual ‘I’ is but a temporary illusion. Bodies come, and bodies go; and with each incarnation, we as souls grow experientially, intellectually, and morally. Nevertheless, it is certain that eventually we must come to know the one true ‘I’, the one divine Spirit who is our eternal Self—containing all bodies and all souls. That One is our sole identity. So, put away all concern or fear: realize that you are the one all-inclusive, all-pervasive Self of the universe. Know that you are eternally blissful and imperishable and be free.

NOTES:

1. For a complete account of the mystical experience referred to here, please see my book, *The Supreme Self*, available as a free download at my website: www.themysticsvision.com.
2. The imperishability of the Divine Light is formulated in the first law of thermodynamics (otherwise known as the law of the conservation of energy) which states that the total energy of a closed or isolated system (such as the whole universe) is constant; energy can be transformed from one form to another but cannot be created or destroyed. In other words, it is eternal, imperishable.

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31. Mystical Experience And Near-Death Experience (8-19-2016; rev. 10-15-17)

Have you ever noticed the difference between the descriptions of the spiritual world by the so-called ‘mystics’ and the descriptions by people who claim to have had a ‘near-death’ experience? Have you ever wondered how these stark differences can be explained or reconciled? Is it possible that both perspectives are true? The vast majority of those people who claim to have had a ‘near-death’ experience speak of having gone out of their bodies, of having perceived a loving light at the end of a tunnel, and of having moved rapidly through that tunnel toward the light. They experienced themselves as being outside of their body, sometimes hovering over it, and observing the occurrences taking place in the physical world around them. While they were out of their bodies, they sometimes perceived deities or messianic figures, or experienced meetings with relations and loved-ones who had ‘passed over’. They sometimes experienced visions of beautiful ethereal landscapes to which they became attracted; and then came the sudden, often non-volitional, return to their body.

The mystic, on the other hand, experiences no such out-of-body excursions, no soul-travels or events relating to an individual ‘me’ at all. Rather, he experiences a sudden shift of consciousness wherein he becomes the all-pervading spiritual identity, in which there is neither subject nor object, neither an ‘I’ nor a “Thou”, but rather a blissful awareness of identity with the one eternal Being. The mystic experiences that he *is* that eternal Being (‘I and the Father are one’), and often is

able to see clearly into the workings of that eternal Being as well. How can we possibly explain the vast differences between these two descriptions of spiritual experience?

First of all, we must come to recognize that there are at least three distinct levels of subtlety, not only in the world, but in ourselves. These three levels of subtlety are simply progressive elements of the one conscious Being who is the sole reality.¹ Our own human make-up is a reiteration of that triune cosmic reality; in other words, as conscious beings within the divine reality, we have our origin in the eternal Being—the Divine Mind; and secondly, within that Divine context, we exist as an individual soul; and lastly, we have a transient association with a physical body. On the physical level, we see each other solely as physical bodies; but the awareness of one who experiences a ‘near-death’, no longer identifies himself as a body, but sees himself and experiences existence as an individual soul, living and operating on what some call ‘the astral plane’. As a soul, he is free of the body, and yet retains all the memories of the people and past events associated with it.

However, at the highest, or deepest, spiritual level, there are no souls, and no individual perceptions; there is only the divine Self, the Eternal, wherein all the various levels of manifestation—including the material and the astral—are merely potential. This ultimate reality has been called the One, Brahman, the Godhead, the Self, the Void, the Tao, and many other names; and is realized by enlightened sages to be the highest truth, the sole source and origin of all the manifest planes of existence, and everyone’s ultimate Identity.

Our experiences are different because the focus of our attention is different. A focus on the state of one’s personal well-being will likely result in an experience of the Soul; whereas a focus on God and the determination of His will would likely result in an experience of the Divine Mind. People often experience themselves in a near-death situation as souls moving about in the astral realm at a very crucial time regarding their personal well-being; some few, whose focus is on God and His service, are blessed to experience the eternal Being as their true Self. But understand: there is no contradiction implied between these two experiences. The Self may reveal Itself as one’s eternal Identity, or it may present Itself as a disincarnate soul on the astral plane or as a soul associated with a body in the manifested plane. Many, including myself, have seen disembodied souls on the astral level; and many, including myself, have experienced the universal Spirit, the divine Self, as the ultimate Identity. The soul and the Absolute Self are not mutually exclusive. He is all, and all is He; He also transcends all. The Godhead,

Brahman, the one Spirit, is the ultimate Reality and Source of all that exists and constitutes the ultimate knowledge to be attained. But, at a grosser level of consciousness, each of us is an individual soul, just as we are temporarily—at a yet grosser level—manifested in this phenomenal world as a *material* body.

The Creator and the created, manifesting as our divine Self and the individual soul, are not two; there is only the One, appearing in many forms, and as the many varied souls. And yet, since most of us do not frequently experience an intensely intimate level of conscious deliberation toward God, we seldom experience ourselves as the divine Self; instead, we experience ourselves as individual souls with distinctly unique attributes, and we deal with others as individuals with unique attributes—though in fact, there is only the one Divinity living and acting in the world as manifold individual souls. Look more deeply into the truth! Lift the veil! See God in each other! There is no one here but God—appearing as you and as all in this world. This is the highest knowledge and the highest attainment. Identify with the attributeless Self and become free of the limiting soul attributes. Once you’ve known your divine Identity, those soul-attributes may or may not continue. No matter. Know that you are free. Know that you are the one Divine Reality.

Realization of the eternal Self does not put an end to one’s soul or one’s body, just as, in other cases, knowing or recognizing the whole does not negate or destroy the constituents within that whole. We, as souls, live within Him, even while being aware of our oneness with Him; and we partake of that vision by His loving Grace. So, let us put away our arguments, acknowledging that we are both the divine Self and a uniquely individual soul, and that we may rightly experience ourselves as either the one or the other. These two, Self and soul, are complementary aspects of our own conscious identity; they are, in fact, complementary aspects of the one all-inclusive Divinity in which we live and breathe and have our being.

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NOTES:

1. The three levels of subtlety were described by Plato, and by the 3rd century Roman Neoplatonist mystic-philosopher, Plotinus, as consisting of *the One*, followed by Its Creative Power, *the Divine Mind*, and thirdly, the *Soul*. According to Plotinus, our material bodies consist of an illusory substance produced by *the Divine Mind* by which the *Soul* is ensnared and with which the *Soul* then becomes identified. Our modern understanding of the nature of *Matter*, by which we recognize that the

phenomenal world is comprised of electromagnetic impulses masquerading as substance, would seem to reinforce Plotinus' notion of *Matter* as an illusory substance.

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32. Mystical Experience As Future Science (2-25-2015)

I find it interesting that the mystical realizations that occurred to me in 1966 are now showing up in Western civilization's developing scientific view of the universal reality! Here are a few of the revelations in that mystical experience that are presently being formulated as emerging elements of the scientific paradigm:

I. Complementarity Of Identity

The term, *complementarity*, as coined by Niels Bohr, refers to the wave-particle duality of quantum physics: that light/matter may appear as either wave or particle, depending on the experiment designed to measure it. It appears now as a wave, now as a particle—but not both at the same time. And yet, to frame a *complete* definition of the structure of light or matter, both wave and particle are required. Thus, they are considered *complementary*. This characterization is carried over in the definition of consciousness, as It contains a similar dual nature. It is revealed in mystical experience that, in a manner very similar to the complementarity of wave and particle, the universal undifferentiated Consciousness (God) and the individual mind/body (Soul) are complementary states of the same indivisible reality. In other words, we—you and I—are both the one universal Consciousness and the limited individual consciousness; we can experience ourselves now as one, now as the other—but not both at the same time. Mystical experience is possible only because of that complementarity, as mystical experience is nothing more nor less than the transition from one state of being to its complementary state. This non-dual view of the one reality is solely a metaphysical one at this time—it has long been a feature of Eastern metaphysics—but it seems certain that, in the course of time, this view will become accepted on a broad cultural scale, even in the sciences. Mystical experience is the empirical (albeit subjective) proof of this complementary view. It is the experiential basis for the Vedantic expression, “I am That”, and, once experienced, is the foundation of certainty in the mind of the experiencer. In my own case, this experience began with the realization that:

O my God, even this body is Thine own!
 Though I call to Thee and seek Thee amidst chaos,
 Even I who seemed an unclean pitcher amidst Thy waters—
 Even I am Thine own.

Does a wave cease to be of the ocean?
 Do the mountains and the gulfs cease to be of the earth?
 Or does a pebble cease to be stone?
 How can I escape Thee?
 Thou art even That which thinks of escape!

...I am the pulse of the turtle;
 I am the clanging bells of joy.
 I bring the dust of blindness;
 I am the fire of song.
 I am in the clouds and in the gritty soil;
 In pools of clear water my image is found...¹

II. The Inseparability of Mind And Body (Consciousness And Matter)

In the clarity of that mystical revelation which I experienced, *I* (the one Consciousness) was aware that *I* pervade all existence: “I am in the clouds, and in the gritty soil.” In addition to this, I was unable to discern any categorical separation of my mind and my body. It is a common convention that the body is ‘the temple’ in which the spirit (mind or soul) resides. But, from the vantage of that integral Consciousness, I could see no separate encasement. “Where is the temple?” I exclaimed; “Which the Imperishable? Which the abode?” But there was no duality. It was clear that body-mind was not two things, but one—like a figure in a dream, or a mentally projected character in a fantasy, consisting of a unified mental and physical reality. This is not only counter-intuitional, going against our religiously inculcated bias concerning the separation of soul and body at the moment of death; it also denies the conventional Cartesian duality that constitutes the Western philosophical rationale for our conceptual separation of mind and body—and, by implication, our separation of consciousness and matter on a cosmic scale. But the mystical experience reveals that these two are inseparable, one. How is this possible?

For long it had been assumed that consciousness was an epiphenomenon of the evolving complexity of matter; but eventually the illogic of that assumption

became apparent. Today, precedence is being given to the consideration of the supposition that Consciousness is the primary Essence in which and from which the entire universe of Matter evolved. Many theoretical physicists are now convinced that these two long-divided categories are in fact integral. And, though there is as yet no empirical proof (aside from mystical experience) to warrant scientific certainty, there is growing inferential evidence to support this supposition.

III. The Cyclic Universe

There has been much speculation and inference in recent years concerning the origin of the cosmos, but little in the way of scientific evidence, or certainty. In recent years, Cosmologists have proposed a theory sometimes known as the 'Cyclic' or 'Oscillating' Universe Theory. A number of scientists, including Albert Einstein, were enamored of this theory, but it was eventually shown to be flawed. This was because the theory posited by physicists was a purely physical system, governed by purely physical laws required to restart the 'Big Bang' after each 'Big Crunch'. But, of course, the source of the universe is not physical, but noumenal, not to mention omnipotent.

The Divine Mind is not limited to relying on the laws of physics to recreate the universe; It creates in accord with Its own will. That Divine Mind is alive and conscious throughout the universe, and beyond the universe; and It remains so when the universe is withdrawn. It is not some insentient mechanical force. It is the Inventor of mechanical force; and It is the Intelligence of which our own meager intelligence is but a limited facsimile, possessing but a hint of the power, living clarity, alertness, and efficacy of the universal Mind. It is He who, of His own will, breathes forth the conscious universe in the form of a brilliant transformative light.

This vision of the repetitive nature of universal creation in a cyclic, breath-like manner was first depicted in the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad Gita. The Bhagavad Gita (Song of God) was written ca. 500 B.C.E., as part of a larger work, the Mahabharata, (reputedly by the legendary sage, Vyasa), as a dialogue between Krishna (an incarnation of God) and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. And it is Krishna who, speaking as the Divinity itself, teaches to Arjuna the perennial philosophy, explaining that in His Divine unmanifest state He manifests the entire universe, which he describes as his 'lower' nature;² and He manifests this 'lower

nature', the material universe, in a cyclic fashion, periodically creating, then dissolving it:

At the end of a cycle, all beings, ... enter into My Prakriti [His creative Power], and at the beginning of a cycle, I generate them all again. Controlling My own Prakriti, I send forth, again and again, all this multitude of beings, helpless under the sway of maya.³

My own acceptance of this cosmic scenario did not come about from the theories of physicists, nor from the Hindu scriptures, but from my own indubitable vision, a vision granted me by the Divine Self. In the transformed state of consciousness during which I experienced the integral Consciousness as my own, *I* (Universal Consciousness) exhale the universe in the manner of an expanding breath alternating with an inhalation in which the universe is then withdrawn back into its source. While immersed in this clear awareness, I stated: "I have but breathed, and everything is rearranged and set in order once again. A million worlds begin and end in every breath, and in this breathing, all things are sustained." I regard this as the very word of God.

IV. Non-Locality

The common-sense view of the world accepts the principle of *Locality*: that objects are only directly influenced by their immediate (local) surroundings. This includes the possibility that an action at one point may have an influence at another point, if something in the space between the points, such as a field, mediates the action. To exert an influence, something, such as a wave or particle, must travel through the space between the two points, to carry the influence. But *Non-Locality* is a developing scientific view that has come about through the hard-won conceptual battles between the great intellects of the twentieth century, Bohr, Einstein, Heisenberg, Born, Schrödinger, etc. My 'mystical' realizations, on the other hand, were the result of a direct clarified *perception* of reality itself. In that direct clarified perception, it was perfectly clear to me that "all things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain." I saw, in other words, that all that is in the universe is integrally coordinated by a single will, so that 'all things move together of one accord'. This view of physical reality, translated into the terminology acceptable to the scientific community, states that there are no independent causes or effects occurring solely in a local setting, but everything is interconnected, coordinated universally—that is to say, non-locally. Here is a particularly well-expressed version of that understanding presented by David Bohm and his co-author, Basil Hiley, in a 1975 article:

The world which we perceive cannot properly be analyzed into independently existent parts with fixed and determinate dynamical relationships between each of the parts. Rather, the ‘parts’ are seen to be in immediate connection, in which their dynamical relationships depend, in an irreducible way, on the state of the whole system (and indeed on that of broader systems in which they are contained, extending ultimately and in principle to the entire universe). Thus, one is led to a new notion of unbroken wholeness which denies the classical idea of analyzability of the world into separately and independently existent parts. We have reversed the usual classical notion that the independent ‘elementary parts’ of the world are the fundamental reality, and that the various systems are merely particular contingent forms and arrangements of these parts. Rather, we say that inseparable quantum inter-connectedness of the whole universe is the fundamental reality, and that relatively independently behaving parts are merely particular and contingent forms within this whole. ⁴

...Ultimately, the entire universe (with all its particles, including those constituting human beings, their laboratories, observing instruments, etc.) has to be understood as a single undivided Whole, in which analysis into separately and independently existent parts has no fundamental status. ⁵

While the question of non-locality originally arose from the thought-experiment outlined in the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen (EPR) paper in which Einstein entered into his historical debate with Neils Bohr in 1935 in the attempt to prove Quantum Theory incomplete, the technological means to actually perform the empirical tests needed to determine the scientific basis for non-locality, proving Bohr correct and Einstein incorrect, did not present themselves until long after Einstein had passed away. In 1964, the theoretical physicist, John Bell, and experimenters Alain Aspect, in 1982, and Nicolus Gisin, in 1997, conclusively proved both by theorem and by empirical methods that “non-locality” is a scientific fact, and this fact has been universally accepted by the community of physicists throughout the world. Nonetheless, there remains a wide gulf between the direct ‘mystical’ knowledge of reality and a conceptual scientific knowledge based on empirical proofs. The mystical experience is a direct revelation of the living Self who is the source and director of the universal array. It is not a linguistically framed theory of universal

mechanics, but rather a living confirmation of the one divine Mind who both contains and *is* everything that exists, including oneself. No amount of familiarity with or proficiency in the understanding of the theorems of quantum physics is capable of producing that direct knowledge.

The scientific principle of *Non-locality* simply expresses in an oddly roundabout way the fact that has been known for millennia by the faithful of all religions that we exist within a ‘reality’ imaged forth by the one Divine Mind, and in which everything that occurs is His doing and occurs within Him according to His omnipotent Providence. Of course, the activities taking place within the universe are not dependent upon ‘local’ causes; there are no local causes or effects. Causation begins with Him and extends in an infinite network of effects throughout the universe to bring His purposes to fruition. We are simply His eyes and ears, His instruments of knowing and exultation, His singers and worshippers, His imagined others. We too are non-local, rooted in the infinite and eternal Cause, and extending throughout the expansive universe as wave-particles of the one living Being. Halleluia!

NOTES:

1. For a complete account of my own ‘mystical’ experience, see my book, *The Supreme Self*, Winchester, U.K., O Books, 2006; or download it from my website at: www.themysticsvision.com.
2. *Bhagavad Gita*, VII.5; Swami Nikhilananda (trans.), *The Bhagavad Gita*, New York, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1944, 1987; p. 83.
3. *Bhagavad Gita*, IX.7, 8; *Ibid.*, p.103.
4. Bohm, David and Hiley, Basil, “On The Intuitive Understanding of Non- Locality as Implied By Quantum Theory”, London, Foundations of Physics journal, Vol. V, 1975; pp. 96, 102.
5. Bohm, David, *Wholeness And Implicate Order*, London, Routledge, 1980.

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33. Mystical Experience And David Bohm's Implicate Order (8-26-2016)

I.

For many of us, *reality* is synonymous with the appearance of the physical universe that we perceive through our senses. And yet, in numerous spiritual traditions from antiquity to the present, reality is said to contain at least *three* consecutive layers or levels of subtlety: The subtlest and most primary level is the divine Source—the Absolute, the One, which is eternal, transcendent and undifferentiated; followed by the divine Mind—the noumenal realm of thought forms produced from the One; and lastly, the Material World—the sensually perceived phenomenal realm of space, time, and matter that manifests the thought-forms of the divine Mind. These three levels are similarly described in Platonist, Vedic, and Buddhist literature going back many centuries,¹ and in each of these traditions, it is insisted that these three levels of subtlety do not constitute three different separate realities but are simply progressive elements of the one conscious Being who is the sole reality. It is also said that our human make-up is a reiteration of that triune cosmic reality; that as conscious beings within the divine reality, we consist of a Divine essence, a mind/soul, and lastly, a physical body. When we draw on our intellect, we are drawing from the level of mind/soul; and when we draw on our inherent strength and eternal wisdom, we draw from the Divine in us, the ultimate source and core of our being.

In more recent times, the twentieth century theoretical physicist, David Bohm (1917-1992), has similarly described the one reality as consisting of these three levels of subtlety, referring to the primary source level as 'the superimplicate order' (though he neglects to explicitly define it), the secondary ideational level as 'the implicate order', and the last, physical level, as 'the explicate order'. Bohm approaches this analysis of the physical reality from the perspective of a scientist, though traditionally, the description of reality as consisting of these three levels of subtlety exists only in the mystically derived *metaphysical* systems. Conventional empirical *science* does not ordinarily describe reality in terms of these three causal levels. To do so would entail the acknowledgment of a Divine Source, a supernatural causal agent, which would fly in the face of science's professed empirical bias. Physics, as an area of scientific study, delves into the microphysical in Quantum physics, but it never allows for the positing of a source of physical reality from outside of the natural (physical) realm; nor does it ever assume an intermediate subtle, ideational, realm. The suggestion of any such invisible causal realm underlying the Material World would contradict the empirical requirements of science.

Science is bereft of a clear conception of the source and origin of the universe, and yet it does provide a means for the objective confirmation of its materialist theories through empirical proofs. The metaphysical systems, however, with their three-leveled causal progression, *do* provide a plausible Source for the manifest universe, but they do not provide any objective confirmation through empirical demonstrations, but only a subjectively convincing confirmation through what is known as “mystical experience”. I, for one, having directly experienced that interior subjective (mystical) confirmation, must side with the metaphysical systems (and with David Bohm) in asserting that there is indeed a subtle ideational level of reality ² underlying and forming the Material World, an integral but non-physical continuum, the origin of which is a yet subtler noumenal dimension, a “superimplicate order” which we may designate as ‘the transcendent Absolute’, or ‘the supreme Cause’ ³.

If we accept that these three levels of subtlety do indeed exist as causal constituents of our Material World, we have to ask, ‘How is that three-leveled material consistency compatible or incompatible with the cosmological theory of the origin of the universe by means of the Great Radiance (the Big Bang)?’⁴ It is a question that reminds us of the unfathomably complex mystery faced by anyone attempting to comprehend the Divine creation. In the sudden universal manifestation known as ‘the Big Bang’ or ‘Great Radiance’, God’s creative ‘breath’ did not simply contain matter-bearing Light but was suffused with divine Consciousness. The wave-particles that constituted the material constructs of that budding universe, had to contain in themselves a subtle-level dimension, not particularized, but wavular, continuous, and conscious. And yet, how can we comprehend it? Who indeed can begin to imagine the complex wizardry of the Divine Mind in forming and inhabiting this amazing extravaganza that is our universe? The poor human mind is helpless to conceive it.

It is well known that words do not adequately represent these subtle levels of reality; rather, these realms are to be *experienced* as real conscious states of being, not simply labeled and defined for purposes of philosophical speculation. Whether the subtle ideational reality underlying the physical reality is called “the Divine Mind”, “*Ishvara*”, “the implicate order”, or anything else, matters but little from the mystic’s perspective. What is of importance is to *experience* that subtle reality, and to experience firsthand the Absolute reality, that unknowable One, who is the ultimate Self of all existence. It is only His gracious gift of that liberating experience that is capable of revealing to us the glorious truth of our ultimate

divinity, and of freeing us from the limitations and sorrows attendant upon the false illusory ego.

Having seen into the hidden realm where all is one conscious continuum, and the only identity is that one awareness, I have to declare that underlying this many-formed world of separate distinct entities and personalities is a divine reality in which there is no separateness, but only the one 'I' manifest in and as everything everywhere. How can we know It? How can we experience It? This indivisible continuum can be known by the human intelligence when it is brought by God's grace to a higher subtler level of consciousness. Only then is it possible to perceive It. There is no other way to know of It or to track Its location. It has no time-space coordinates but is revealed only in the unfathomably clear depths of the divine Mind.

II.

“Relativity and, even more important, quantum mechanics have strongly suggested (though not proved) that the world cannot be analyzed into separate and independently existing parts. Moreover, each part somehow involves all the others: contains them or enfolds them.... This fact suggests that the sphere of ordinary material life and the sphere of mystical experience have a certain shared order and that this will allow a fruitful relationship between them.”

-- David Bohm

According to the mystics who have seen into the nature of reality, the one absolute Consciousness—whom we usually refer to as 'God'—is the Source and Cause of all phenomena, manifesting the universe by His Creative Power in a manner similar to the way an individual person projects a thought. This Divine Thought contains implicit within it the conscious Intelligence of the Source; and implicit in it also is the entire design and evolution of the universe, from its initial coming into being to all the refinements and transformations necessary in the process of its ultimate evolutionary development. Science does not recognize such a scenario as tenable and relegates the visionary knowledge of the mystics to the category of speculative metaphysics. However, one brave scientist stepped forward to acknowledge the possibility that the mystic's vision could provide a basis for a true and consistent scientific worldview; his name is David Bohm.

David Bohm (1917-1992) was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania on December 20, 1917. His father was a Jewish furniture dealer, but David went to college, receiving his B.Sc. degree from Pennsylvania State College in 1939 and his Ph.D. in physics at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1943. At U.C. Berkeley, he studied with Robert Oppenheimer; and when Oppenheimer went to Los Alamos to work on the “Manhattan Project”, Bohm remained at Berkeley as a research physicist. There, he worked on the Theory of Plasma and on the Theory of Synchrotrons and Syndrocyclotrons until 1947, when he took a position as an Assistant Professor at Princeton University, working on Plasmas, Theory of Metals, Quantum Mechanics and Elementary Particles. It was there he met and had regular meetings with Albert Einstein.

In 1949, during the repressive McCarthy era, Bohm was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee, and he was asked to testify against Robert Oppenheimer who was being accused of Communist sympathies. Bohm refused to testify and was thereafter tried and acquitted. But the damage had been done; he was fired from his position at Princeton University, and was unable to find work in this country. He then moved to Brazil where he taught briefly at the University of Sao Paulo. He also taught for a brief time in Israel before moving to Bristol, England in 1957. In 1961, he became professor of physics at the Birkbeck College of the University of London, and remained there for the next 30 years, writing and publishing his several books: *Causality and Chance in Modern Physics* (1957), *The Special Theory of Relativity* (1966), *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (1980), and *Science, Order and Creativity* (1987). David Bohm died in 1992.

In the 1950's David Bohm was widely considered one of the most talented and promising physicists of his generation. But his primary work from the 1950's to the 1990's—the ongoing development of his “causal interpretation” (which he later referred to as an “ontological interpretation”) of quantum mechanics as an alternative to the standard ‘Copenhagen Interpretation’—was met with dismissive hostility by the majority of the world physics community. In an attempt to provide a scientific formulation of quantum physics consistent with the mystic's vision of a Divine source and manifestation of our world, Bohm presented in his book, *Wholeness And The Implicate Order*, his fully developed theories.

The first part of his book's title, “*Wholeness*”, was a theme that grew out of his long familiarity with Quantum Physics. Ordinarily, when we seek for causes of isolated events or things, we settle arbitrarily on a preceding local event or state which we designate as the *cause* of the present event or state. But, as scientific investigations tend to show, the internal web of relationships between events and

between things is endless. From the point of view expressed by the mystics, and by David Bohm, isolated things and events are not caused by other things and events but are rather linked in a complex web of relationships within a larger common Whole whose nature in turn determines the nature of those constituent things and events. In other words, the material reality is no longer thought to be the independent bits of which the Whole is constituted, but rather the other way around: the overall condition of the universal Whole governs the functions and interrelations of all constituent parts within the Whole.

Here is how Bohm and his co-author, Basil Hiley, explained, in a 1975 article, this understanding:

The world which we perceive cannot properly be analyzed into independently existent parts with fixed and determinate dynamical relationships between each of the parts. Rather, the ‘parts’ are seen to be in immediate connection, in which their dynamical relationships depend, in an irreducible way, on the state of the whole system (and indeed on that of broader systems in which they are contained, extending ultimately and in principle to the entire universe). Thus, one is led to a new notion of unbroken wholeness which denies the classical idea of analyzability of the world into separately and independently existent parts. We have reversed the usual classical notion that the independent ‘elementary parts’ of the world are the fundamental reality, and that the various systems are merely particular contingent forms and arrangements of these parts. Rather, we say that inseparable quantum interconnectedness of the whole universe is the fundamental reality, and that relatively independently behaving parts are merely particular and contingent forms within this whole.⁶

The second part of his book’s title, “*The Implicate Order*”, referred to his suggestion, inspired by the mystic’s vision, that the phenomenal world “unfolded from an “enfolded order” in a noumenal Source, referring to these two as “the implicate order” and “the explicate order”.

According to his theory, *the implicate order* is an invisible substratum containing the archetypal template for the emergence and dynamic unfoldment of both matter and consciousness, much the way an individual’s mind is the archetypal template of conscious thoughts produced from it. And in his wonderfully lucid writings

Bohm endeavored to explain how the *explicate order* (this perceived phenomenal universe) has its source in and unfolds from an (invisible) implicate, or enfolded order. The implicate order implicitly contains the explicate order, and the explicate order explicitly manifests the implicate order.

Bohm theorized that, in the implicate order, all things—matter as well as consciousness, body as well as mind—are integrally interconnected in a way that transcends space and time. This is because the implicate order is a noumenal substratum resembling a transcendent Thought-matrix which generates, forms, and organizes the constituents of the explicate order. Quanta appear wavelike until they are observed; that is, witnessed by a conscious observer. Then they appear to those observers as particles; i.e., individualized ‘things’. Bohm suggests that this wave/particle complementarity can be explained by the implicate-explicate order duality: The implicate order is one indivisible continuum consisting of waves; the explicate order is perceived by the human consciousness as particulate, individualized.

Together, the implicate order and the explicate order comprise what Bohm regards as *the holomovement*, which he describes as “the unbroken wholeness of the totality of existence as an undivided flowing movement without borders”.⁷ In the mystic’s vision, the origin of the Whole (the ultimate Cause), is found to reside in the divine Mind (the implicate order), and in principle in its causal precedent, the transcendent Absolute Being. But in David Bohm’s ontological theory, nowhere is there any indication of a primary origin for this “undivided flowing movement”. However, he does suggest that the ultimate source of the *holomovement* might include a “superimplicate order”, which in turn may result from a “super-superimplicate order”, and so on indefinitely. In his theory, he does not explicitly define these possible primary causal orders, but, ultimately, underlying all noumenal implicate orders, there must presumably be an Origin, an eternal Intelligence, or Divine Ground, something along the lines of the Absolute, or “One”, of Neoplatonism. But Bohm, as a scientist dedicated to the empirical method, seems to prefer to remain wholly noncommittal regarding the nature of any primary supernatural cause.

For the mystic, informed by direct visionary experience, the perceivable phenomenal world is the manifestation of the creative Energy of God. At the root of that creative Energy is the divine Source (what Plotinus called *Nous*, “the Divine Mind”), whose ultimate root is the “One”, the ineffable Absolute that is the Godhead. It is the Divine Mind that extends Itself by way of Its Creative Energy to the entire universe. The Divine Mind is inherent and implicit in Its own Creative Energy, and so It fills all animate and inanimate beings, to varying

degrees according to their evolution, with Its own Consciousness and Joy. Thus, the manifested beings, who are the evolutes of Its Energy, are able to know within themselves Its being, Its freedom, Its Consciousness, Its Joy. They are able to transcend in mind the limitations of the egocentricity imposed on them in the process of manifestation, and able to ascend in consciousness to the very being of God, knowing Him as their own original and authentic Self.

In that mystical ascension to the Divine Mind (which Bohm refers to as *the implicate order*), the manifest beings become able to perceive the perfection of the universal manifestation in which all created things are linked in a wonderful unity of being and becoming.⁸ Like the atoms in a cresting wave, or in the flowering of a rose, they are welded together in a synchronous dance of movement toward their intended evolutionary culmination. How vast and perfect in every way is their dance! It is indescribably wonderful! In the mystic's vision the unfolding of the universe and all that unfoldment entails is seen to be a coordinated and integrated presentation wherein "all things move together of one accord;" and "assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain."

If David Bohm experienced at some time in his career such a mystical revelation, I have not been able to find any mention of it. Nonetheless, his exposition of "The Implicate Order" evinces many similarities to the direct perceptions frequently reported by numerous mystics. In David Bohm's broad suppositional proposition, causality is seen to reside in the ideational substratum (the implicate order), and then becomes manifest in all its effusive multiplicity as a universe of time and space (the explicate order). Small-scale causes in the explicate order are deemed irrelevant, as they are merely expressions of an implicit order. And, while this 'ontological interpretation' of David Bohm's is a marvelous restatement of the expressed vision of the mystic, it remains, from the standpoint of science, merely another speculative philosophy, unprovable (unfalsifiable) by science's criterion of proof. Bohm's work remains ground-breaking proof, however, that gnosis is a fruitful source for scientific investigation and understanding. Perhaps other scientists will follow the path he has shown, expanding on his vision, and bringing us closer to a science that corresponds with the declarations of revelation proffered by the gnostics of every generation.⁹

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NOTES:

1. For Plato and Plotinus, the three levels of reality were *the One*, *the Divine Mind (Nous)*, and *the physical cosmos*. For the authors of the Upanishads, it was *Brahman/Atman*, *Ishvara/Maya*, and *jagat*. For the Buddhists, it was *Tatatha/Dharmakaya*, *ekachittakshan*, and *samsara*.
2. I use the term, 'ideational' to describe the secondary subtle level of reality only because I don't have a better or more fitting term... It is 'ideational' in the sense that it is non-physical, and non-individualized; the separate forms of this ideational reality are perceived (by the divine eye), but they are constituents of a single continuum. That continuum is subtler than physical reality, but we have no acceptable term to describe it, except for 'spirit' or 'idea'. It does not consist of a humanly-produced 'idea', but a divinely-produced 'idea'. It might be construed as Plato's 'Forms' or David Bohm's 'implicate' order of reality, without individuation or material substance.
3. 'The transcendent Absolute' or 'Supreme Cause' is the uncreated Source, beyond time and space, the Godhead, the imperceptible and inconceivable Self of all.
4. For references to 'the Great Radiance', please see my article, "How God Made The World (6-07-2013)", or "The Phenomenon of Light (10-15-2014)", or "First Light (4-12-2013)" all available at my website: www.themysticsvision.com.
5. Bohm, David; quoted in Friedman, Norman, *Bridging Science And Spirit*, St. Louis, Missouri, Living Lake Books, 1994; p. 95.
6. Bohm, David and Hiley, Basil, "On The Intuitive Understanding of Non-Locality as Implied By Quantum Theory", London, Foundations of Physics journal, Vol. V, 1975; pp. 96, 102.
7. (David Bohm, *Wholeness And The Implicate Order*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, p. 172).
8. The mystical experience is frequently referred to as "the unitive experience" because it reveals the identity of the experiencer to be identical with the one all-pervasive reality; i.e., it reveals that 'I and the Father are one.' This nondual experience occurs because the mystical experience is a revelation of the subtle

level of reality, what Plotinus called *Nous*, (the Divine Mind), or what David Bohm calls 'the implicate order'. Previous to the "unitive experience", the 'explicate order', which had been the experiencer's former "reality", appeared to consist of separate individual things and beings in a world of incredible diversity and multiplicity of identities. But now, suddenly awakened to this subtle level of reality, there is but one identity spreading everywhere; 'I' am in the clouds and in the gritty soil; 'I' am the pulse of the turtle; 'I' am the clanging bells of joy. In that implicate order, one 'I' is all-pervasive, constituting the one and only identity everywhere.

9. For a first-person account of 'the mystical' or 'unitive' experience, see my book, *The Supreme Self*, Atma Books, 1984, available as a free PDF document downloadable from: www.themysticsvision.com.

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VIII. PHILOSOPHY

Even after God's interior revelation, many of the hows and whys of the operation of this universe remain unknown and are subject only to speculation and guesswork. These speculations fall into the areas of philosophical theory. Such theories are by nature undemonstrable and therefore unconfirmable; but, if these philosophical theories are guided by one's mystical experience and reason, they can often lead to trustworthy conclusions.

1. Where Consciousness Comes From (12-27-14)

For a long time now, the emphasis in physics on empirical knowledge of physical reality in general and of subatomic matter in particular tended to diminish attention to the existence of non-material, non-objective aspects of reality, to the extent that such subjective realities as mind, thought, and consciousness were scarcely regarded as existing at all. Today, however, these subjective realities are not only acknowledged but studied and researched as valid subjects of interest. And since consciousness appears to be primary to thought or mind, various branches of science have focused on discovering the origin of consciousness. At first glance, the circumstantial evidence for the appearance of consciousness in simple life-forms would seem to imply the existence of consciousness going back to the earliest Paleolithic times, at least. However, some contemporary neurobiologists have reached the conclusion that consciousness only came into existence with the advanced evolution of biological forms and is a product (an epiphenomenon) of complex neural activity in the brain; and that, being a manifestation of a material process, consciousness itself is nothing more than a *material* phenomenon.

There are others, however, who assert the primacy of Consciousness as the source and substance of the universal creative energy of which the entire universe of matter (including brains) is constituted. The strong inferential evidence of an intelligent source for the origin of the cosmos would seem to imply that consciousness prefigured even the Big Bang. This position goes back thousands of years and is reflected in the various religious views of the origin of the cosmos by a conscious Creator, and in the Platonist philosophical tradition as well. That position was later reiterated in the philosophical view of René Descartes (1596-1650), who asserted that mind (spirit) and matter were two separate *kinds* of existents comprising man—both emanating from God (the divine Mind), but with differing characteristics. This was the basis of the well-known philosophy of Cartesian dualism, which holds that these two categories are inviolably separate and distinct entities: one, the Divine uncreated part of man (the mind or spirit); the other, the divinely created form-manifesting part (the body). Though this philosophy offered no essential modification to earlier Platonist thought, it was the product of a careful rational introspection that proved appealing and persuasive to many of its time.

The overwhelming scientific materialism of the nineteenth century found no place, however, for the *soul*, and presumed to repair the conceptual mind-body split with the belief that all that exists is solely material, including mind; and that such a

thing as ‘spirit’ or ‘soul’ does not exist. This seems still to be the position of contemporary materialist science. The scientific thesis (though rarely formally expressed) continues to be that there is no God, no soul, and that mind and consciousness are merely manifestations of the material activities of neurons and synapses in the brain.

In describing the origin of the cosmos, today’s materialist scientists start with the assumption of the *a priori* existence of a material object called a ‘singularity’, in which an infinitely dense mass of plasmic energy became somehow crammed into an infinitesimally minute speck of potentiality. Then, due to some random quantum fluctuations, that mass burst its bounds, exploding outwardly to become the expanding universe of space, time, matter and invisible forces. This is the theoretical picture that current science paints. Scientists of a materialist bent do not even question what produced this singularity; i.e., why there is something rather than nothing, and how it happened to be. Furthermore, these materialistically inclined scientists are placed by this theory in the uncomfortable position of being required to explain how conscious life emerged or evolved from the cooled remains of this boiling soup of inanimate primal plasmic mass/energy.

Today, in the early part of this twenty-first century, despite the implausibility of their theory of the origin of the universe, scientists—Physicists, Cosmologists, and Neurophysicists—are busily pursuing the assumption that consciousness somehow arose a few million years ago as an ‘epiphenomenon’ of the self-organizing activity of brain cells and neurons; i.e., consciousness just popped out of biological tissue by some as yet unknown process of spontaneous manifestation, and is basically a phenomenon arising from the neurological activity of biological matter. Here is a statement of that theory by John Searle, a well-known contemporary professor of philosophy, who states that

Consciousness is a biological feature of the human and certain animal brains. It is caused by neurological processes and is as much a part of the natural biological order as any other biological feature. ¹

Others, more cautious, say merely that:

Consciousness indubitably exists, and it is connected to the brain in some intelligible way, but the nature of this connection necessarily eludes us. ²

Another says:

I doubt we will ever be able to show that consciousness is a

logically necessary accompaniment to any material process, however complex. The most that we can ever hope to show is that, empirically, processes of a certain kind and complexity appear to have it. ³

Nonetheless, over the years leading up to the present, little progress has been made in the attempt to formulate a detailed and satisfactory theory of the material origin of consciousness. In the beginning of a recent book of memoirs (2006) by Nobel prize-winning Neurobiologist, Erich Kandel, a hopeful and promising picture of future progress is offered:

The new biology of mind ... posits that consciousness is a biological process that will eventually be explained in terms of molecular signaling pathways used by interacting populations of nerve cells. ... The new science of mind attempts to penetrate the mystery of consciousness, including the ultimate mystery: how each person's brain creates the consciousness of a unique self and the sense of free will. ⁴

But then, in the latter part of the book, he admits that:

Understanding Consciousness is by far the most challenging task confronting science. ... Some scientists and philosophers of mind continue to find consciousness so inscrutable that they fear it can never be explained in physical terms. ⁵

What we do *not* understand is 'the hard problem' of consciousness—the mystery of how neural activity gives rise to subjective experience. ⁶

... Biological science can readily explain how the properties of a particular type of matter arise from the objective properties of the molecules of which it is made. What science lacks are rules for explaining how *subjective* properties (consciousness) arise from the properties of objects (interconnected nerve cells). ⁷

As I have stated repeatedly in the past, this search of materialistic science is a misguided one, and can only lead to a dead end; for in order to understand how consciousness arises in biological forms one must put first things first: consciousness does not inexplicably arise from neural activity in the brain; Consciousness is the intrinsic nature of the Divine Mind in which this universe exists, and that very Consciousness is implicit in the entire universal manifestation, being all-pervasive, and therefore naturally becoming evident in the evolutionary development of earth's biosphere. Once we understand that all forms in the

universe are manifestations of the one universal Consciousness, we will then be able to better understand our own nature and understand our intimate relationship to the Consciousness of the universal Mind. The acknowledgement of the universality and divinity of our own conscious Self will eventually require a radical transformation in the thinking of all men and women of science which, though it may take centuries in which to unfold, will usher in a truly golden era of Enlightenment.

Today, we look back on the contemporaries of Copernicus with the advantage of hindsight and wonder how the intelligentsia of that time could possibly have failed to perceive that the earth travels about the sun, and not vice versa. Once the truth is known, the errors of the past seem so obviously unsupportable. Once the light shines, the preceding darkness is clearly recognized. One day, when it is readily recognized and acknowledged that the world of space, time, matter and energy arise from the Divine Consciousness, men will wonder how it could possibly be that once seemingly intelligent people thought that consciousness was an epiphenomenal product of biological matter.

It must one day be universally understood that Consciousness is the primary, the original, reality—beyond time and space, and all manifestation; It is the eternal Ground and Identity of all that exists. It transcends the universe, while constituting its essence—as a dreaming mind transcends its dream-images, while constituting their essence. Consciousness is not contained within matter, nor is it the property of any individual being. It is not produced by any material process; but rather is the underlying Source of all matter and all processes. It is the fundamental nature of Being, the foundation of the phenomenal universe, the Light of the Projector which flashes its images in the space-time dimension which we know as ‘the world’. The projected human images on this screen are unable to perceive that Light, for they are in It and of It. They can only come to know that eternal Consciousness through the gift of a divinely produced revelation by which they will discover that their own consciousness is in essence the one Divine Self, the one eternal Consciousness that is the sole Being in all existence.

In that revelation they will realize that the phenomenal universe is made of a primal energy that is radiated or projected by the one Divine Consciousness.⁸ We may find a clue to this understanding by pondering the nature of our own minds, since, as has often been said, we are images of God. Consider the nature of our dreams: the consciousness of the dream-character is really the consciousness of the dreamer, is it not? And what of the body of the dream-character? Is it not a projected image produced by the dreamer’s mind, and consisting also of

consciousness? By analyzing this clear analogy, one may begin to have a notion of how this universe came to be. But, of course, in order to know it fully, one must realize it for oneself; one's mind must be illumined by the eternal Light itself, and drawn into Its hidden depths. To obtain that grace, all men focus their minds on Him through prayer and contemplative longing, and He shines His Light on whom He will.

* * *

NOTES:

1. John Searle, professor of philosophy at U.C. Berkeley, quoted by Richard Restak, *Mysteries of the Mind*, Washington D.C., National Geographic, 2000; pp. 71-72.
2. Colin McGinn, *The Mysterious Flame*, quoted in R. Restak, *Ibid.*; p. 85.
3. Jeffrey Satinover, *The Quantum Brain*, N.Y., John Wiley & Sons, 2001; p. 220.
4. Eric R. Kandel, *In Search of Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of Mind*, N.Y., W.W. Norton & Co., 2006; pp. 9-11.
5. Kandel, *Ibid.*; p. 377.
6. Kandel, *Ibid.*; p. 382.
7. Kandel, *Ibid.*; p. 381.
8. When God revealed Himself to me, I realized that He breathes the universe into existence and withdraws it again in a repeated cycle. In recent years, after this article was originally written in 2006, I have speculated in various writings that some fourteen billion years ago the divine breath of the Creator became manifest in time and space as a burst of high frequency electromagnetic energy, or radiation—at levels of intensity in the *gamma* range or above—which scientists currently refer to as 'the Big Bang'. This theory seems to me a likely one—much more likely than the materialist theories of contemporary science—and is explained at length and in detail in several of my later articles, including 'The Phenomenon of Light', 'How God Made The World', 'Recent Theological Developments', and 'First Light'—all of which may be found in the Menu at my website: www.themysticsvision.com.

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2. The Problem of Consciousness (2014)

Over the years I have written extensively on the irreconcilable disparity between what mystical experience has taught me about reality and what materialistic science claims to know about reality. The failure of materialistic science to explain the very presence in this universe of the immaterial thing called ‘consciousness’ is an intellectual concern, not only of mystics like myself, but of many logical thinkers and scholars as well.

One such thinker has sent to me his own dissertation on The Problem of Consciousness which offers a highly intelligent summation of the most pressing problems confronting the paradigm of materialistic science today, along with an astute presentation of the radical solution to these problems. In many ways, this exposition by Steve Dzmidzenka closely parallels my own writings on this theme, but I think you will find, in reading it, that he has his own genius and his own uniquely intuitive perspective. I’m certain you will find Steve’s insightful exposition, “Our Mathematical Universe And The Hard Problem of Consciousness” as thrilling, informative, and thought-provoking as I did.

Our Mathematical Universe And The Hard Problem of Consciousness Copyright © 2014 by Steve Dzmidzenka

Scientific materialism is a philosophical opinion that is closely associated with science. It grew up alongside science, and many people have a hard time distinguishing it from science. But it is not science. It is merely a philosophical opinion. But it is one that leads to incomprehensible conceptual difficulties in the understanding of the universe— especially the hard problem of consciousness and the phenomena of subjective experience.

The Hard Problem of Consciousness

In the beautiful words of David Chalmers, “Consciousness poses the most baffling problem in science. There is nothing that we know more intimately than conscious experience, but there is nothing that is harder to explain. All sorts of phenomena have yielded to scientific investigation in recent years, but consciousness has stubbornly resisted. Many have tried to explain it, but the explanations always seem to fall short of the target. Some have been led to believe that the problem is intractable, and that no good explanation can be given.”

Let's start with giving a rough definition of what we mean by consciousness here. Consciousness is something that has a capacity for subjective experience. I am not going to define it further by trying to define what subjective experience is. It would be a waste of time as we all already know intuitively what it is. When you notice that you feel sad or excited, angry or scared, feel desire, see colors, hear sounds, taste flavors, feel solidity of touch, when you notice your own thinking and awareness of abstract concepts – you notice your own subjective experience. Its existence is fundamentally the only undeniable fact that each one of us knows for oneself. The question is 'what in our universe of elementary particles accounts for the existence of consciousness/subjective experience?'

It's not that we lack some futuristic technology to probe into a brain. The problem goes so much deeper – it is more than impossible – it is inconceivable how subjective experience can possibly arise in a 'sea' of elementary particles doing their mindless thing.

The Cartesian dualism between Matter and Consciousness has plagued science from the beginning. No one has a clue how to resolve it. Literally all attempts to approach the problem have been shown to be utterly unsatisfactory. The main reason for that is the unbridgeable conceptual chasm between the categories of matter/energy and consciousness/subjective experience. These two phenomena are fundamentally of a different type and expressing one in terms of another is called 'category mistake'.

It's been assumed by scientists of a materialistic bent that this dualism must be resolved in physical terms – meaning that it's assumed that matter is at the very bottom of the ontological hierarchy, that matter is fundamental and is the substratum of everything that exists—that literally everything is made up of Matter and can be explained in terms of Matter, its measurable parameters and its behavior. In other words, it can be explained in terms of mass, charge, spin, speed, and motion. There is essentially nothing else in the conceptual apparatus of materialism that could be invoked to account for the phenomena of consciousness/subjective experience.

So how do we find a way out of this cognitive dissonance? The hope of those stuck in the materialist/physicalist camp is that somehow arranging zillions of these elementary particles into some kind of elaborate networked configuration in space will give rise to subjective experience – that somehow, as if by magic, the phenomenon of consciousness will emerge out of the spatial organization of purely physical entities. After all, the neural network of brain matter is in essence nothing

more than a certain arrangement of interacting particles in space. There is really nothing else to it on the fundamental level. Is there room for subjective experience in this picture? No. From the materialist/physicalist perspective, the source of subjective experience is completely incomprehensible.

Some philosophers like Willard Quine and Daniel Dennett got so desperate that they started insisting on an even more incomprehensible solution: that subjective experience is just an illusion and really does not exist at all.

Some insist that consciousness is mere information processing and integration, but, somehow, they fail to realize that, even though consciousness has characteristics of information processing/integration and of intelligence, and these characteristics can be simulated in a computer (aka artificial intelligence), these characteristics only abstract certain aspects of consciousness while forgetting about the experience itself, which is really the key characteristic. Christof Koch said, “You can simulate weather in a computer, but it will never be ‘wet’.” Similarly, you can simulate intelligence in a computer, but it will never be conscious.

The materialist/physicalist approach to consciousness raises many questions; for instance, consider the example of the experience of vision: Thermonuclear reactions in the Sun produce photons – carrier particles of electromagnetic energy. The photons propagate towards earth and eventually hit optic nerves in our eyes. The optic nerve, in response, generates electrical signals that travel further along the neural pathways of the brain. Neural cells in the brain get excited and start firing more electrical impulses. This entire cascade of electrical activity is a purely physical phenomenon, and, despite being undoubtedly difficult to trace and decode in detail in a lab, represents absolutely no fundamental conceptual problem. But suddenly, as if by magic, in the midst of this purely physical phenomena, arises the subjective experience of, let’s say, redness – in other words, the perception, awareness, and experience of color. Who/what is experiencing this? The brain and neural cells? The chemical and electrical activity? It’s utterly incomprehensible.

It’s plainly obvious that neither the neural cells of the brain nor the electrochemical reactions/interactions between them experiences anything in themselves. We must assume that they are only communicating information about what to experience to some other entity— an independent entity that is capable of experiencing in a fundamental and irreducible way. In other words, an entity that is, in itself, actually capable of a subjective experience. One such entity—in fact, the *only* entity that is fundamentally capable of subjective experience— is called *consciousness*. The question then becomes ‘How can we explain how the

neural cells of the physical brain can even interact with this independent and immaterial consciousness?’ This is called the problem of interaction and it’s resolved below.

In order for us to see the light at the end of the tunnel, we need to start with re-stating that matter/energy and consciousness/subjective experience are fundamentally of a different **type** – of different **categories**. In order for us to make sense of how one interacts with another, we must admit that both must be of the same type – of the same category; otherwise we are stuck in an irreconcilable conceptual chasm.

We have two alternatives here: either both are of a material/physical type made of the stuff of matter/energy or both are of some intangible/immaterial type since consciousness seems to be immaterial. At this point, we don’t know which alternative is true, but we do know that the materialistic alternative, which in essence is trying to reduce consciousness to physical terms, leads us to incomprehensible conceptual difficulties and even forces some to completely deny the existence of the subjective experience altogether, treating it as a mere illusion. So, let’s see where the other alternative leads us, and let us judge the tree by its fruits.

We know that consciousness/subjective experience is immaterial. But how can matter/energy be immaterial as well? Isn’t that just another incomprehensible idea? At first glance, it seems to be. After all, we believe we look into the outside world and feel its solidity. But the image of the outside world and the feeling of solidity as well as all other sensations of it are just that – immaterial sensations inside your consciousness, sense data. Even the materialists agree that we don’t see the outside world itself; we only see our sense data. The presence of this sense data in our awareness does not at all mean that it is produced by a material universe – it only means that it is produced by *something*. And here comes a very elegant solution which has become possible to conceive only recently thanks to some new developments in physics and computer science: Modern physics is highly mathematical. In fact, at the level of subatomic particles – which is literally all that’s currently believed to exist – it’s pure math. Can it be that what we call ‘the material universe’ is really nothing more than an immaterial mathematical structure? Can it be that our sense data is produced according to this mathematical structure?

It’s not merely *my* idea that the universe is mathematical; there are some Nobel level theoretical physicists saying exactly that: “it from bit” in the words of John

Wheeler. For example: Max Tegmark, in his book, *Our Mathematical Universe*, comes to the conclusion that: “Math does a decent job inspiring wonder among physicists about why it works so well.” The answer isn’t obvious, but he thinks he knows why: “It’s because reality *is* math”. Seth Lloyd proposes that the universe itself is a quantum computer (computing the mathematical structure of physical laws). Paul Dirac says, “God is a mathematician of a very high order and He used advanced mathematics in constructing the universe.” Galileo Galilei declared that “The book of nature is written in the language of mathematics.”

Please realize that the existence of the universe is not denied. What is meant here is that it’s not material, but mathematical; and this mathematical structure representing the universe is an elaborate system of abstract equations and algorithms according to which our sense data (the holographic matrix) is produced. In other words, the universe is a mathematical simulation.

But the question is, ‘Where does this mathematical structure exist?’ If we cannot imagine where it can possibly exist, it means that we are stuck in another incomprehensible pit. After all, it’s very hard to imagine that a mathematical structure exists by itself in some kind of void. Moreover, there must be something that computes it because we do know that the universe is dynamic and not static. Fortunately, the answer is easy.

From our own subjective experience, we know that all abstract concepts, including mathematical ones, exist in our individual consciousness. If we re-interpret the entire physical universe as The Grand Mathematical Structure, then this structure must also exist in some kind of consciousness – not in our individual consciousness, but in a Consciousness external to ours. Cosmic Consciousness? This Cosmic Consciousness literally thinks (more precisely, computes) The Grand Mathematical Structure into existence at this very moment. The results of this computation are input into our individual consciousness as colors of a 3D image, sounds, smells, flavors, sensations of solidity, temperature, pleasure/pain, and all other sense data. You can also think of the totality of sense data as a virtual matrix (yes, just like in *The Matrix* movie) – a matrix that we naively mistake for the external ‘material’ world around us – only instead of machines, as in the movie, there is Cosmic Consciousness. In the plainest language, the external ‘material’ universe is simply the thoughts of Cosmic Consciousness projected into our awareness as sense data. As Plato famously stated in his Allegory of The Cave, we only observe the shadows of reality. In other words, we only observe sense data (shadows) projected onto our limited consciousness according to The Grand Mathematical Structure (abstract Platonist forms).

Instead of the physical universe, there is Cosmic Consciousness out there; thus it's no wonder that our individual consciousness exists. And obviously, since it's consciousness here and there – inside and outside, both have no trouble interacting with each other.

In this new ontological paradigm, **Consciousness is fundamentally the only thing that exists**. Everything else that *exists* exists inside Consciousness either as an individual consciousness or as information/experience/sense data – absolutely without any physicality. Our individual consciousness exists only because reality itself is Consciousness. What we call 'the external universe' is just the holographic matrix/sense data projected into our awareness. The matrix itself is computed by Cosmic Consciousness according to the algorithms and equations of the Grand Mathematical Structure.

Cartesian dualism is completely resolved in a worldview in which, both on the inside and on the outside, there is nothing but consciousness. Both are of the same immaterial type/category and thus both have no trouble interacting with each other: both interact by exchanging information (which is immaterial as well) and not by exchanging physical particles of energy as in the materialistic view. The information is translated into sense data/subjective experiences and specifies how our individual consciousness is changed to produce experience.

This, no doubt, sounds fantastical (though not so much to philosophers of an Eastern mindset), but it fits very nicely and is infinitely more comprehensible than trying to explain how consciousness/subjective experience arises in a swirl of elementary particles doing their mindless thing. I am afraid we are literally *forced* by reason to accept this idealistic worldview. Here, we should apply Sherlock Holmes's dictum: "When you have excluded the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth".

Max Planck: "I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative of consciousness."

John Wheeler: "I suggest that we may never understand this strange thing, the quantum, until we understand how information may underlie reality. Information may not be just what we 'learn' about the world. It may be what 'makes' the world."

Ken Wilber in his book, *The Eye of Spirit*: "From De Broglie's assertion that mechanism demands a mysticism to Einstein's Spinozist pantheism, from

Schrodinger's Vedanta idealism to Heisenberg's Platonist archetypes: these pioneering physicists were united in the belief that the universe simply does not make sense and cannot satisfactorily be explained, without the inclusion in some profound way, of consciousness itself. And using words that few of these pioneering physicists would object to, James Jeans pointed out that it looks more and more certain that the only way to explain the universe is to maintain that it exists in the mind of some eternal spirit."

James Jeans: "I am inclined to the idealistic theory that consciousness is fundamental, and that the material universe is derivative from consciousness, not consciousness from the material universe... The universe seems to me to be nearer to a great thought than to a great machine. It may well be, it seems to me, that each individual consciousness ought to be compared to a cell in a universal mind."

George Wald: "Mind, rather than emerging as a late outgrowth in the evolution of life, has existed always as the matrix, the source and condition of physical reality—the stuff of which physical reality is composed is mind-stuff. What we recognize as the material universe, the universe of space and time and elementary particles and energies, is then an avatar, the materialization of primal mind. In that sense there is no waiting for consciousness to arise. It is there always".

There can be no question on which side of this debate modern physics falls!

Let's review the most obvious implications of this new ontology, which is literally forced upon us by the necessity to explain the existence of consciousness/subjective experience:

1. **It resolves the Cartesian dualism and the problem of interaction.**
2. **It resolves the hard problem of consciousness.**

It turns out that if consciousness is assumed to be fundamental, the problem is not hard at all. In the words of Donald Hoffman: "If you want to solve the mind-body problem you can take the physical as given and explain the genesis of conscious experience, or take conscious experience as given and explain the genesis of the physical. Explaining the genesis of conscious experience from the physical has proved, so far, intractable. Explaining the genesis of the physical from conscious experience has proved quite feasible". The key to the latter, as I have described, is realizing that matter/energy and consciousness/subjective experience **MUST** be of the same type/category: either

both are material/physical (which proved intractable and incomprehensible) or both are immaterial (proved extremely productive). Otherwise, there is no conceptual bridge to link them and conceive even in principle how[the] one can interact with [the] other.

3. **It provides the ontological framework for the resolution of the duality of particles/waves in Quantum Mechanics.** There are no particles or waves in the mind of Cosmic Consciousness; there are only the equations of The Grand Mathematical Structure. According to the current formulations, these are equations of the wave function. At the point of observation, the equations are computed, and the results are translated into our sense data.
4. **It resolves the quantum entanglement mystery – “spooky action at a distance”.** When two photons become entangled, regardless of how far they travel away from each other, they still keep an informational link to each other; i.e., measuring the spin of one photon instantly results in the opposite spin for another, despite the fact that many light years might be separating them, obviously violating ‘the speed of light’ limit. That’s a great mystery in current physics; but it is resolved in the new paradigm, in which all that exists inside the Grand Mathematical Structure is an equation that describes this system of entangled photons. There is no need to communicate anything across light years as the information about spins is simply embedded as variables in the equation itself. When the spin of one photon is measured by us, the equation is computed by Cosmic Consciousness. The result includes the spins for both photons. They are determined at exactly the same time.
5. **It explains the nature of space.** There is no ‘space’ inside Cosmic Consciousness. There is only The Grand Mathematical Structure computed by it. This mathematical structure includes primitive numeric variables like mass, charge, spin, distance, time interval, speed, etc – all integrated into abstract geometry. Space itself is an abstraction in that abstract geometry.
6. **It explains what space is expanding into.** Astronomical observations show that the universe is expanding – more precisely, the space itself is expanding. The question of course is what is it expanding into? Is there more space beyond? That would mean that space is infinite – something that physics absolutely cannot accept, as it insists at all costs that the universe is a finite system. It’s a great mystery. In the new paradigm, space itself is simply abstract geometry of The Grand Mathematical Structure. There is nothing

that is expanding into anything – only variables in the equations of The Grand Mathematical Structure change their values.

7. **It explains what space curves into.** The general relativity theory showed that space is curved around mass, but what exactly does space curve into? Space needs another dimension to do this. If space is simply abstract geometry of The Grand Mathematical Structure, this problem resolves itself.
8. **It explains why multi-dimensional formulations like those in string theory do not present a fundamental problem.** Even though our sense data seems to be 3-dimensional, we are not forced to insist that The Grand Mathematical Structure itself is formulated in and is limited to three-dimensional geometry. For example, a wave-system of electrons does not exist in three-dimensional or ten-dimensional space – it exists as a formula/equation in the mind of Cosmic Consciousness. The equation is computed, and the result of the computation is translated into our 3D sense data. This also means that the holographic principle can work for our universe, as it shows that the three dimensions of reality we observe may in fact be a two-dimensional information structure “painted” on some sort of cosmological surface. It’s all hard to imagine, but if the reality is The Grand Mathematical Structure, then, it’s easy to see how the mathematical formalism of the holographic principle can literally describe our universe.
9. **It explains the nature of the substance of elementary particles.** There is no physicality/material substance in the mind that is Cosmic Consciousness; there are no electrons, quarks, atoms, etc. – there are only numeric variables like mass, charge, spin, distance, etc. These are variables in the equations of the Grand Mathematical Structure. In other words, if we wish to speak in terms of Objects/Properties, there are indeed properties, but no objects. There is no substance out of which objects are made.
10. **It explains why math is so good at describing our universe and why the physical laws that we discover are mathematical.** Cosmic Consciousness is the best mathematician in existence; It designed The Grand Mathematical Structure. When physicists discover mathematical equations that describe the universe, they literally discover equations that correspond to those in the mind of Cosmic Consciousness. We are not completely there yet; all the equations we have discovered so far are approximations at this point. But we will get there some day and we will know exactly what the Grand Mathematical Structure is.

11. **It explains the complete discretization of the universe.** Imagine a thought experiment where we use a hypothetical microscope capable of magnifying matter without any (uncertainty) constraints. With every jump of magnification, The Grand Mathematical Structure needs to be computed to produce new sense data. If matter were continuous there would be an infinite number of magnification jumps possible – a situation akin to Zeno’s paradoxes, so the computation process that Cosmic Consciousness would have to do, would be infinite. For the computation to be finite, it must be done in discrete blocks. Moreover, the precision of the computation must always be the same. The level of discreteness and precision is probably specified by Planck’s constant, Planck’s length, Planck’s time, etc. There is a minimal mass and a minimal amount of energy. The geometry of space time is discrete/pixelated; i.e., there is minimal length, area, and volume. This is in complete agreement with Quantum physics. Quantum means discreet. Discretization of The Grand Mathematical Structure is the mechanism to deal with computational infinities.

12. **It explains where consciousness comes from.** Our individual consciousness exists only because Consciousness itself is what the ultimate reality is. We are just ripples in the infinite ocean of Cosmic Consciousness. Metaphorically, the best way to visualize the relationship between Cosmic Consciousness and our individual consciousness is by imagining an ocean. The ocean itself is Cosmic Consciousness, but each individual wave in the ocean is our individual consciousness. Both are inseparable – just as each wave is a part of the entire ocean, though it is at the same time a distinctly identified entity within the ocean.

13. **It resolves the fine-tuned universe problem.** By recent calculations, the probability of ending up with a universe such as ours is practically nil. There have been multiple parameters identified that—to an extremely high level of precision—must be exactly what they are for the universe to allow the existence of stars, stable atoms, and life. Isn’t it highly ironic that we live in a universe that we observe to be a statistical improbability of the multitude of “cosmic coincidences”? But, if there is an entity that is conscious, and which computes The Grand Mathematical Structure into our sense data, then this entity must have designed it. And if that is so, then the fine-tuned universe problem simply falls away.

- 14. It resolves the problem of free will and purpose in universe.** In the traditional materialistic universe, there is no purpose in the impersonal ‘ocean’ of elementary particles doing their mindless thing. But, if the universe is designed, it’s designed for a purpose. The purpose of human life must obviously be aligned with the purpose of its Creator. But it’s a question for free will to decide on that. Free will in itself is an inherent and irreducible capacity of intellect, which is itself an inherent and irreducible capacity of human consciousness. In the animal consciousness, these capacities appear to be negligible or completely zero.
- 15. It explains the nature and function of the brain.** The human brain is simply an algorithm (in The Grand Mathematical Structure) that processes information and gives instructions to our individual consciousness about what and how to experience. By finding the right triggers, it’s possible to instruct our consciousness to experience (or not to experience) all kinds of things – e.g. psychedelic substances, anesthesia, etc. Another function of this algorithm is to filter out information. Clearly, there is so much more happening in The Grand Mathematical Structure than what our consciousness is instructed to experience. It should be possible in principle to find ways to tweak a brain to filter out information.
- 16. It explains why there will never be a Turing machine (aka a binary/quantum computer) capable of consciousness/subjective experience.** Even a human brain cannot produce consciousness; it only imprints on and gives instructions to an entity that is fundamentally capable of subjective experience. Such an independent entity is called consciousness. Intelligence is not consciousness; it’s only one aspect that characterizes it – experience being the main one. A computer can only simulate intelligence – thanks to some smart algorithms; but fundamentally, all there *is* is just a flow of electrons and voltage states (computed according to Boolean logic in the case of a binary computer and the logic of superpositions in the case of a quantum computer). In other words, there are just ones and zeros in a logical pattern. What *is* possible, however, is to integrate computers into a brain and influence consciousness through it. This actually has already been demonstrated.
- 17. It explains the nature of mystical experience.** Cosmic Consciousness can literally flow into an individual consciousness and become its subjective experience. Needless to say, all boundaries are dissolved in that state and

there is simply an awareness of cosmic oneness and the most perfect state of consciousness.

It must be said, however, that, while all of this is completely consistent with the scientific evidence, none of it is testable and provable in the strict (experimental) sense, as this entire subject is what's called a meta subject – as in metaphysics. But it's obvious that the materialistic paradigm is exactly of the same nature as well; it too is completely untestable and unprovable, and in addition, it is completely incomprehensible.

Truly, all we know is our own sense-data on top of which we layer an elaborate system of abstractions (language). What lies behind the sense-data – the physical universe or Cosmic Consciousness– is not accessible to scientific inquiry in the strict (experimental) sense. Physics operates solely inside the realm of the sense-data in the sense that constructions and conclusions of our intellect are compared against experimental data – which is nothing more than sense-data. But if we want to go further, we have no means to compare constructions and conclusions of our intellect against what lies behind the sense-data. Only pure reason not backed by experimental data (or mystical experience) can take us there.

It would seem that as long as pure reason actually solves problems in a manner that is both self-consistent within itself and consistent with the conclusions of experimental physics, we are completely justified to accept it as our belief system. The alternative is a forever unresolved tangle of incomprehensible conceptual difficulties. Here, it's really not a question of rebuttal – both paradigms are equally irrefutable in a strict sense, and by standards generally accepted and practiced in the physical sciences. Here, it's a question of which paradigm has a better explanatory power and the one with a greater power should be chosen.

So, if the idealistic paradigm is not testable and provable in the strict sense, do we need to bother? The answer and the choice is strictly yours. However, if you do decide it's not worth anything, you must also admit that sticking habitually to the materialistic paradigm, from the perspective of formal proof, is not only equally unjustified for the same reasons as above, but is actually counter-productive and, at this point – after several millennia of intellectually struggling to think in terms of the materialistic paradigm – even dumb, as it only leads to an incomprehensible conceptual chasm with no hope of resolution, as the history has shown.

So, the choice is yours: either stay agnostic, waiting for a resolution which will literally never come if you insist on strict formal experimental proof, or simply

pick a side. By picking the idealistic side, many of the immense conceptual difficulties are resolved – while at the same time incorporating and even elevating math and mathematical physics into the tools by means of which we truly discover the content of the mind of God. For me, the choice is easy. The age of materialism is overdue to be overthrown once and for all. Enjoy!

P.S.

I am not theistic at all in the traditional sense, but needless to say, Cosmic Consciousness is of course instantly identified with God (God the Father in Christian terms – not God The Son). Cosmic Consciousness is fundamentally the only ‘thing’ that exists – thus It is omnipresent, because everything else exists inside It. For this very reason, It is omniscient; Its thoughts constitute The Grand Mathematical Structure. It’s omnipotent – because by changing Its thoughts, It changes the universe. The act of designing and thinking The Grand Mathematical Structure into existence is an act of love. Cosmic Consciousness is infinite, but It divided a finite part of Itself into distinct entities – us. Thus, we are created in the image of God.

Ironically, I’m reminded of a great quote from Robert Jastrow’s “God and the Astronomers”: “For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; and as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of mystics who have been sitting there for centuries”.

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3. Idealism And Materialism (Orig. 4-2007; revised 9-01-2015)

These days, one doesn't often hear the terms, *Idealism* or *Materialism* bandied about, but these two traditionally opposing philosophical worldviews were once topics of heated concern. These two starkly differing views of the nature of reality have been at odds with each other for twenty-five centuries beginning with Pythagorus, Xenophanes, Anaxagorus and Socrates on the idealist side, and Thales, Leucippus, and Democritus on the materialist side. For centuries, idealists held that *Mind* is the primary reality of which matter is an evolute; materialists held that *Matter* is the primary reality of which mind is an evolute. Science gathered its forces solidly on the materialist side, while the spiritual philosophers and Mystics stood squarely on the side of idealism. Every mystic who ever lived has declared the idealistic viewpoint, stating that the ultimate reality underlying all phenomena is unquestionably noumenal; i.e., a transcendent Mind. There are no materialists among mystics.

Idealism suggests that the universe is of the nature of an *idea*; that its substance is *thought*—the thought of the one eternal Mind. Mysticism, therefore, is an idealist point of view which also asserts the possibility of the *direct* apperception of the ultimate reality in a rare, profound, and purely introspective experience, wherein an intimate knowledge of the noumenal Source and the nature of the universe and human existence is acquired. This “mystical experience”, say those who have known it, reveals the formless noumenal Source, the groundless Ground, of all physical and mental phenomena, which is seen to constitute everyone's original and eternal identity. Such an experience seems to have been first spoken of in the West in ancient Greece among the populace taking part in the “mystery religions” such as the Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries (whence mysticism gets its name); and later formed the basis of the philosophical position of such seers as Socrates and his disciple, Plato, Philo Judaeus, and Plotinus. In the East, mysticism made its appearance in the writings of Lao Tze, the Upanishads, and the early Buddhist texts, and later in the Middle East with the teachings of Hermeticism, and the rise of Christianity and Gnosticism, all of whose central figures claimed an intimate, mystical knowledge of the noumenal Source.

The materialism of the early Greeks, such as Leucippus and Democritus, on the other hand, tended to regard all of reality as consisting of small indestructible particulate entities, called *atoms*, which aggregated together to form all the varied shapes and individual beings that are perceived through the senses. While materialistic science may be said to have originated with the early Greek

philosophers cited above, it had to struggle in the West for many centuries against the strictures of religious doctrine, and only began its cultural ascendancy in the West from the sixteenth century onward, influenced by such philosophers as Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant, and the works and accomplishments of scientists such as Galileo, Isaac Newton, and Johannes Kepler. By the twentieth century, the empirical method, associated with the materialistic viewpoint, had become synonymous with science. From that time forward an emergent 'scientism' became the established 'religion' of our Western civilization. And, while there were always a few maverick idealists among the ranks of scientists, the vocal majority utterly rejected the slightest hint of mysticism or idealism and held as firm doctrine that the universe came into being and is sustained through "natural," that is to say, purely material, processes.

Today, however, our understanding has changed; the materialism of the ancients no longer has a role in the modern world. The philosophical position of materialism was once regarded as diametrically opposed to the position of idealism, but today, we have come so far in revising our understanding of the nature and substance of Matter that the positions of materialism and idealism no longer seem so distant from one another. In the 1930's, as developments in the newly formulated Quantum theory began to reveal some of the more unexpected aspects of Matter, one scientist, by the name of James Jeans, foresaw the coming changes that these developments in physics would bring to our philosophical views, and, understanding that the distinction between materialism and idealism was rapidly diminishing, he wrote in his book, *Physics And Philosophy*, the following:

"A ...revolution has occurred in physics in recent years. Its consequences extend far beyond physics, and in particular they affect our general view of the world in which our lives are cast. In a word, they affect philosophy. The philosophy of any period is always largely interwoven with the science of the period, so that any fundamental change in science must produce reactions in philosophy. This is especially so in the present case, where the changes in physics itself are of a distinctly philosophical hue; a direct questioning of nature by experiment has shown the philosophical background hitherto assumed by physics to have been faulty. The necessary emendations have naturally affected the scientific basis of philosophy and, through it, our approach to the philosophical problems of everyday life. Are we, for instance, automata or are we free agents capable of influencing the course of events by our volitions? Is the world material or mental in its ultimate nature? Or is it both? If so, is matter or mind the more fundamental? Is mind a creation of matter or matter a creation of mind? Is the world we perceive in space and time the world of ultimate reality, or is it only a curtain veiling a deeper reality beyond? ¹

And in his book, *The Mysterious Universe*, Jeans suggested that recent scientific discoveries show that:

the stream of knowledge is heading toward a non-mechanical reality. *The universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine.* Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder into the realm of matter; we are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it as *the creator and governor of the realm of matter*— not of course our individual minds, but the Mind in which the atoms (out of which our individual minds have grown) exist as thoughts.”²

And in his lecture to the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1934, entitled, “The New World Picture of Modern Science”: he said:

The new physics obviously carries many philosophical implications, but these are not easy to describe in words. They cannot be summed up in the crisp, snappy. sentences beloved of scientific journalism, such as that materialism is dead, or, that matter is no more. The situation is rather that both materialism and matter need to be redefined in the light of our new knowledge. When this has been done, the materialist must decide for himself whether the only kind of materialism which science now permits can be suitably labeled materialism, and whether what remains of matter should be labeled as matter or as something else; it is mainly a question of terminology.

“What remains is in any case very different from the full-blooded matter and the forbidding materialism of the Victorian scientist. His objective and material universe is proved to consist of little more than constructs of our own minds. To this extent, then, modern physics has moved in the direction of philosophic idealism. Mind and matter, if not proved to be of similar nature, are at least found to be ingredients of one single system. There is no longer room for the kind of dualism which has haunted philosophy since the days of Descartes.”³

What then is Matter? We can easily state what it is not: it is *not* a phenomenal substance made of solid indestructible particles; we know that! But what it *is* is not so easy to say. ‘Mind’, ‘Matter’, ‘Energy’, ‘Space’—these are names we have given to certain elements of this transforming panorama of mental and physical perceptions in which we find ourselves; but it is no longer possible to say where one begins and the other ends, for it now appears that there is but one indivisible

reality— “one system”, as Sir James Jeans describes it—of which Mind and Matter are both ingredients. Scientists today don’t know what to call it, and simply refer to it as “the universal continuum”. Those of a mystic bent do not hesitate to call it “God”, and to say, “We live in God. He is the only one, and He contains everything. He is alive and consciously awake, and everything moves and acts in unison with His will.”

“Matter”, it turns out, is a misnomer; there is only the one indivisible system, or God—appearing as distinct objects, as quanta, as scientists, as their laboratories, as distant stars, as bursts of celestial light. There is nothing that is not God. He is both Mind and the apparent objects of the world that we once thought of as Matter. Your body too is God; but more importantly, He is the very consciousness that is aware *as you*! And it is that very awareness that is capable of directly experiencing through His illuminating Grace the clear and amazing truth that all this is God!

The question we now have to ask is: ‘If Matter and Mind are in fact indistinguishable ingredients in one indivisible system, then how does materialism differ from idealism?’ The long-held belief in the opposition of these two positions now appears to have been nothing but a long-held misunderstanding of the nature of Matter. The two positions, if not yet in total agreement, are at least no longer in clear opposition! But does this mean that, since materialism and idealism now seem to be compatible, science and mysticism are therefore also reconcilable?

No. Science and Mysticism are two very narrowly defined and mutually exclusive categories of knowledge. Science deals in tangibly objective sense data and does not comfortably extend to less tangible subjective mental states. The very definition of science limits its focus to only that which may be empirically verified. And that requirement assures that science will probably always tend to have a phenomenal bias and will grant little credence to noumena experienced in a subjective and unverifiable state of awareness.

Science and Mysticism represent knowledge obtained through two radically different methodologies: they can come up with common results, and, although unlikely, can agree on their implications; but they will always remain divergent methods of knowledge-gathering. Science represents the ordering of *external* observations of phenomena perceived by the senses in the normal waking state; mysticism represents the *internal* observation of noumena intuitively perceived by the mind in a highly extraordinary, but well documented, contemplative state. They are really two different *kinds* of knowledge, referred to as *science* and *gnosis*. *Science* is from the Latin *scientia* (knowledge), derived from *scire* (to know), and

usually denotes the organization of objectively verifiable sense experience; *Gnosis* is a Greek word, also meaning knowledge, but denoting an inwardly “revealed” knowledge unavailable to empirical science.

The difficulty is that advocates of phenomenally based science not only refuse to acknowledge the validity and relevance of *gnosis*, but do not even recognize the possibility of its existence. Today, Science is still so steeped in the antiquated materialistic perspective (based on a false understanding of what ‘matter’ is) that scientists and, through their influence, “educated” members of the public, routinely regard all those who hold to an idealistic view as unfortunate misguided members of the superstitious, ignorant and uneducated masses. Those who are labeled as *mystics* are held in especial disdain and are the subjects of frequent ridicule in our materialist-oriented culture. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, colleges and universities around the nation have been instilling this arrogant prejudice in the youth who flock to them for their one-sided technological educations. One has to wonder if we are not due at this time in our history for a return of the cultural pendulum to a fresh idealism, one that is informed by both science *and* gnosis.

It seems to me that we are now at a crucial period in our cultural history when the valid findings of Science need to be balanced with the equally valid findings of Gnosis. The two must be acknowledged as correctives to one another, as coequals in the endeavor to accumulate meaningful and relevant knowledge of our world and the nature of our own existence. It is necessary to make a real attempt to come to terms with these two very different ways of knowing, to bring clarity to the present differences between the worldview which each promulgates, to point out the areas of possible rapprochement, and perhaps light the way to a universally shared recognition of Science and Gnosis as *complementary* aspects of knowledge in a greatly expanded vision of the vast potentialities of human experience.

* * *

NOTES:

1. Sir James Jeans, *Physics And Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 1942; a full reprint of this book may be found at:
http://www-history.mcs.st-and.ac.uk/history/Extras/Jeans_Part_I.html
2. Sir James Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe*, New York, Macmillan Co., 1931, pp. 83-84.

3. Sir James Jeans, from his address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, entitled, *The New World Picture of Modern Science*. A transcript of this talk may be found at:
http://www-history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/BA_1934_J2.html

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4. Freedom Or Determinism? (1-12-2016)

In the field of physics, the dispute over whether light is particulate or wavular played out over several centuries. Isaac Newton (1642-1727) asserted that light was particulate; Michael Faraday (1791-1867) and James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879) showed that it was wavular. In the twentieth century, Max Plank and Albert Einstein showed that it was particulate, while Louis DeBroglie and Erwin Schrödinger showed that both light and matter (electrons) were wavular. Eventually Neils Bohr broke new ground in attempting to settle the matter by declaring that light and matter are *both* wavular *and* particulate, depending on how you go about measuring them; and he declared them to be “complementary” phenomena, each contributing to the total information about light and matter.¹ As a result, today we speak of “wave-particles” or “wavicles”, and the phrase “wave-particle duality” is a commonplace one.

For physicist, David Bohm (1917-1992), this wave-particle duality indicated that there were two different planes or levels of reality, one invisible and beyond time and space, consisting of a field of spreading waves, and a second derivative plane manifesting in the physical time-and-space world consisting of particulate matter. The first, the subtle-level plane, he called “the implicate order”; and the second, the physical plane, arising from the former, he called “the explicate order”. He explained the wave-particle duality in terms of these two “orders”, both of which contribute to the appearance of our phenomenal world.²

In the realm of metaphysics, another dispute similar to the wave-particle debate had been going on for centuries: it was between the advocates of causal determinism and the advocates of free will or choice. The question is “Are we entirely governed by the will of the One, or do we have an independent free will to choose and act? Do we move in accordance with the will of one all-inclusive

causal tide, or do we each have the ability to determine our own fate according to our individual choices?" Through the centuries, this dispute went back and forth in a manner reminiscent of the wave-particle dispute, with no resolution. And no one seems to have noticed that this metaphysical dispute was directly linked to the wave-particle dispute of physics!

As David Bohm points out, the one contiguous field or continuum (*the implicate order*) spreads its ripples, and everything consists of those ripples or waves—there are no distinct individual entities; everything is interconnected in the One, and consists of that One, as waves spreading on the ocean consist of the ocean. (*It is this implicate order that is experienced as one's identity in what is referred to as "the unitive, or mystical experience".*.) But in the (phenomenally manifest) *explicate order*, occurring in time/space, things are individualized, particularized, each thing or being having its own separate identity or soul. If David Bohm is correct in his interpretation of the wave-particle duality, then, in a way similar to, and directly related to, the wave-particle complementarity, there is a complementarity in our identification: we are both the one universal (implicate order) Self and the particularized (explicate order) self. Similarly, there is a complementarity of causal determinism (in the implicate order) and independence of will (in the explicate order). Just as we are both wavular and particulate, both identical to the universal Consciousness and distinct as individual souls, we are also both determined and free!

Just as light and electrons, viewed from different perspectives, appear to be either wavular or particulate, our identities, viewed from different perspectives, may appear to be either contained in and identical with the universal Consciousness or manifest as distinct individual souls. Likewise, viewed from those different perspectives, we may appear to be either totally determined by universally interconnected causal factors or independently free to choose our own actions. The notion that we, and everything else in the universe, are both wave and particle (quantum) has not yet sunk into the collective psyche; imagine how difficult it will be for humanity to come to terms with the understanding that, on one plane of reality, we are entirely at the mercy of the universal causal fiat, and on another plane of reality, we are entirely self-determined and solely responsible for our actions—in other words, that we are *both* the wavular manifestations of the one nondual continuum in the implicate order *and* that we are particulate as individual souls in the explicate order; that our wills are *both* determined *and* free! ³

Mystical experience such as that of my own and others, along with the experimental findings of respected physicists, leads us to acknowledge that the

wave-particle duality is not just a curious paradox; it represents a new paradigm whose implications haven't quite yet dawned on the scientists and psychologists—let alone on the public. The fact that light and matter reveal themselves to be particulate in some experiments and wavular in others suggests to some physicists, like David Bohm, that there are two separate (levels/kinds of) realities overlapping—a wavular one and a particulate one—even if the particulate reality turns out to be merely an induced subjective illusion.

So far, humanity has been stumped concerning the question of whether we are determined or free in our willing; but perhaps through a comprehension of the principles of contemporary physics we will arrive at and accept the understanding that the determinism-freedom duality, like the wave-particle duality, is in fact a complementarity. This would require the recognition that we consist of waves on the one ocean of Consciousness, and are, at the same time, individualized entities, independent souls—that we are *both* causally determined *and* free to choose at the same time. Such an understanding, acknowledging that these two apparently opposing notions are in fact complementary to one another—however challenging that may be to our current world-view and to everyone's sanity—would go a long way to resolving the long-standing metaphysical dispute concerning who we are—the One or the many—and whether our will is determined or free.

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NOTES:

1. Neils Bohr: "Evidence obtained under different experimental conditions cannot be comprehended within a single picture but must be regarded as *complementary* in the sense that only the totality of the phenomena exhausts the possible information about the objects." This quote is from: "Discussions with Einstein on Epistemological Problems in Atomic Physics". In P. Schilpp. *Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist*; New York, Open Court Publishing, 1949.

2. In the "mystical" experience that occurred to me in November of 1966 (see my book, *The Supreme Self*), I did indeed feel as though I had entered a different dimension, a different reality, from the one experienced ordinarily in which my identity was uniquely my own, separate and distinct from all others. It was as though these two dimensions, or realities, existed alongside each other, but at uniquely different levels of consciousness, whereas in the one I played my accustomed role in the physical world of distinct individual beings, and in the other

I was omnipresent as a single non-physical continuum extending within and throughout all things.

From my individual perspective, the transition from the consciousness of myself as a distinct individual to that of an all-embracing and pervasive presence was not in my power to accomplish. By some power other than my own, it had just happened. Yet, in that transition, I had become eternal, all-pervading and perfectly whole and complete. For that few minutes, I had become God—or, as David Bohm might say, ‘my consciousness had become one with the Consciousness that manifests and upholds both the implicate and the explicate orders.’ And so, I know, as few others do, that these two intersecting realities—by whatever names they are called—do indeed exist and constitute the foundation and fabric of all existence.

3. Ultimately, of course, the one ‘I’ is the sole reality. It is both Determiner and determined. The question of who is determined by whom thus becomes moot.

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IX. SCIENCE AND GNOSIS

Some of the theories of the workings of the phenomenal universe are amenable to observation and empirical proof, and these yield a kind of knowledge that is categorized as science. But there is another kind of knowledge that is not derived from observation or demonstration, but arises from within, revealing one's divine essence, one's eternal Self. That 'mystical' knowledge is categorized as gnosis. In today's world, there is a keen interest and emphasis on science, and very little interest in gnosis. And yet it is gnosis that instructed the great seers and prophets of yesteryear, and it is gnosis that shall instruct the seers and prophets of tomorrow.

1. Science And Gnosis (from *The Divine Universe*, 2006; rev. 10-14-14, 4-14-16)

I.

Both the word, *science*—from the Latin *scientia*, and the word, *gnosis*—from the ancient Greek, mean “to know”, but the knowledge is of two kinds. Each kind of knowledge has a long and well documented history: Science has developed over the centuries through the positing of rational theories and the rigorous accumulation of physical data, modifying its position as reason, observation and data dictate. Gnosis is also based on experience, but it is experience that is extra-sensual, supra-rational, and wholly subjective, or personal. Science is confirmed by evidence derived from empirical observation; gnosis is confirmed by evidence derived from introspective revelation. Science pertains to knowledge of the gross, material world; gnosis pertains to knowledge of the subtle, spiritual foundation of the world.

Scientists, for example, have determined, through theory, reason, and observation, that the universe of time and space began as an immense burst of high-frequency energy, referred to as “the Big Bang”. Scientists have determined over the past century or so that at some point, about 14 billion years ago, an enormous amount of energy suddenly appeared, expanding and transforming into mass-bearing particles that collectively formed our phenomenal universe. Those scientists have even determined the temperatures and rate of acceleration of this energy in the first few seconds and minutes of its release, and they have cataloged the material particles which were created as this energy cooled and solidified. They are also convinced that, prior to this “big bang”, nothing else existed—not space, not time, not matter; but only this concentrated (electromagnetic) energy in a potential and pre-material state. It was only as these highly-energized wave/particles of light interacted and collided, that they were transformed into material wave/particles, which then became the fundamental components of the universe.

Physicists and cosmologists have further determined that, approximately ten billion years after the ‘Big Bang’ (four and a half billion years ago), remnants of an exploding star, or supernova, within this expanding universe, condensed into our solar system; and that sometime during the next few hundred million years, single-celled organisms bearing a molecule called DNA emerged on planet Earth; that these microbes then evolved, resulting in a prodigious display of living creatures, including *Homo sapiens*, who emerged fairly recently, that is to say, in the last 200,000 to 150,000 years. To this broad scientific theory gnostics (mystics) have no objection, as it is consistent with the knowledge obtained through gnosis. But it

doesn't go far enough if we are interested in knowing the true beginning; i.e., where did this initial energy come from? Science is forever barred from providing an answer to this question, as science, by definition, is limited to empirically demonstrable (material) phenomena only. But gnosis is able to provide the answer to this question; for gnostics have "seen" that the Source of all energy is noumenal—that is to say, 'of Mind'. "Noumenon" is derived from the Greek word, *Nous*, "the divine Mind" of Platonist philosophy, and is defined in Kantian terms as "a thing in itself, unable to be known through perception but postulated as the intelligible ground of a phenomenon." That intelligible ground is unknowable by science, but knowable by gnosis. Gnosis alone is capable of determining the reality of the divine Mind (*Nous*) from which all noumena and phenomena arise.

Gnosis is possible only with the elimination of the ego-mechanism by which a person's awareness is limited to that of a separate individual identity. This ego-mechanism is a subtle mental obscuration that structures a false identification with the biological and psychological processes of individuation. Thus, instead of being aware of the real I-identity that is universal Consciousness, one is restricted to a false artificial identification with the individual's biological and psychological processes. The eternal Consciousness which is essentially one thereby becomes perceived in the awareness of the individual as a separate 'me-identity' integrally associated with a specific material body. However, this ego-mechanism, present in all beings, may be dispelled by an interior revelation that we can only regard as 'divine Grace'. It is a sudden interior illumination that reveals to the human awareness the one eternal Consciousness, which is the origin and substratum of all individuated consciousness.

This 'mystical' experience of expanded awareness has occurred in numerous individuals throughout history. Some of the best known in the Western world are Jesus, the Buddha, Plotinus, Meister Eckhart and John of the Cross; but there are many more. They have described this experience of the revelation of the one eternal Consciousness variously as "the union with God", "the extinction of the ego (*nirvana*, *samadhi*)", "enlightenment", "entering the kingdom of God", or the "mystic marriage of the soul and God." However, all these experiences are synonymous and identical. The accumulated evidence for the occurrence of such a transcendence of the ego and the subsequent emergence into the awareness of and universal identity with the eternal Consciousness is overwhelming. It seems to me it is time for science to acknowledge the existence of such "revealed" knowledge, and to accord it the status of *gnosis*, while attempting to reconcile its own findings with the view of reality put forward by the gnostics.

Little can be learned objectively about the obscurative and limiting ego-mechanism under which we all suffer, for its proper means of study is subjective. The elimination of the obscurative and limiting effects of the ego-mechanism can only be accomplished by an introspective focus – whether by means of a dualistic devotional practice or by intense self-examination. Examples abound of representatives of both introspective methods having obtained the ego-transcending results, revealing to them the divine Mind, or God, through divine Grace.

But science, to its detriment, does not acknowledge this fact; indeed, science does not even acknowledge the possibility of gnosis. Whatever is outside the purview of empirical science is regarded by its representatives as either nonexistent or simply unworthy of study. This is where the difficulty of reconciling science and gnosis begins. It is much like the position of some Middle Eastern countries who hold that reconciliation with the country of Israel cannot occur since they do not recognize the right of Israel to exist. If there is to be reconciliation between science and gnosis, gnosis must be acknowledged as a specific and valid means of human knowledge.

One has difficulty imagining that scientists will ever accept the declarations of mystics as science; and they needn't. But, as human beings interested in comprehending the whole of reality, they would do well to accept them as gnosis, as providing information through an alternate and complementary mode of knowledge that is essential along with science to a complete understanding of reality. The alternative is to remain forever locked in the mystery of a partially known and wholly incomprehensible universe. Both of these two areas of knowledge, science and gnosis, must be acknowledged as valid means if we are to have a comprehensive overview of reality. As Albert Einstein once noted, "Science without religion [gnosis] is lame; religion [gnosis] without science is blind." This is more than merely a vague platitude; it is an insightful recognition that there are two distinct modes of knowledge, each of which, without the other, is incomplete, and both of which are required in order to comprehensively describe all aspects of the total reality.

The question then arises, "who speaks for gnosis?" or "what statements constitute true gnosis from among those statements by the many pretenders to gnosis?" And this is, perhaps, where the true difficulty lies. The answer is that it is the true mystics who speak for gnosis; it is the statements by those who have truly "seen" into the noumenal reality that constitute gnosis. And how do we separate out the true visionaries from the pretenders and from the many vastly diverse belief systems which presently circulate? Unfortunately, there is no easy or foolproof

answer to that question. But, in gnosis as in science, there is a consensus among recognized authorities (mystics) on which we may rely. In my book, *History of Mysticism*, I have discussed the views of many such recognized mystics and shown that, despite the differences of language and culture, mystics throughout history have unanimously agreed on the elements of the noumenal reality.

For so many centuries science and gnosis have remained exclusive of one another, and have tread separate paths, scarcely acknowledging one another. And yet there must be an end to this divisive isolationism. How long shall scientists pretend that the subtler mode of knowledge simply does not exist? In the past, religious faiths have often been in doctrinal opposition to the conclusions of science and have had to adapt over time to the scientific view. The Copernican revolution, Galileo's observations, the Darwinian revelations, and many other scientific pronouncements, were resisted by the establishments of religious faith, and were many long years in being accepted and assimilated by them; but gnosis has never had a quarrel with science. It has simply not been acknowledged as a means of knowledge existing apart from religious faith.

How can the revelations of Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, John of the Cross, and others in the Western mystical tradition simply be ignored? These few have been greatly multiplied and fortified by the addition to our knowledge of the lives and teachings of the great mystics of the Eastern traditions. Have they not all taught of the noumenal Source? And have not all, after their linguistic differences were accounted for, presented identical accounts?

These two camps, science and gnosis, have vied with one another over the centuries for the mind of the populace. And, for the past several centuries, science has been in the ascendancy in this war of ideals and has dominated the attention of all of Western civilization. While I acknowledge the necessity of both of these two modes of knowledge, and have a deep love for science, I am a gnostic, not merely by conviction, but by experiential familiarity; and so, I have long felt it necessary to clearly present the knowledge I have obtained through gnosis in a way that is beneficial to everyone dedicated to the discovery of the true nature of existence.

II.

The basic elements of the Eastern world-view are also those of the world-view emerging from modern physics. ...Eastern thought—and, more generally, mystical thought—provides a consistent and relevant philosophical background to the theories of contemporary science; a conception of the world in which

man's scientific discoveries can be in perfect harmony with his spiritual aims and religious beliefs.

-- Fritjof Capra, 1975

When Fritjof Capra's book, *The Tao of Physics*, was first published in 1975, many found the above statement an amazingly encouraging and promising insight. Conservative scientists, however, found it hogwash. The idea that mystical vision (gnosis) bore any resemblance to the findings of empirical scientific investigation, or that the two could in any way be reconciled was, to these scientists, a laughable proposition. I think that position needs to be reexamined. Science needs gnosis, and gnosis needs science.

Gnosis is generally regarded as belonging to the province of religion. But it is important to distinguish between 'religion' and 'religious faith'. "Religion" is a word derived from the Latin *religare*. *Ligare* means "to tie or bind"; its meaning is reflected in such derivatives as "ligament" and "ligature". *Religare* means to "re-tie, re-bind." It is interesting to note that the word, *yoga*, "to yoke", has a similar meaning. The word, *religion*, which refers to 'the re-connecting or re-uniting of the soul to God', is in fact the inner realization or experience of the inseparable unity of the soul and God, the knowledge (*gnosis*) of the truth that "I and the Father are one." Religious faith, on the other hand, is nothing more than a belief possessed by a group of individuals that certain premises are true regarding God, His human historical representatives, and His purposes. Religious faith may be possessed by anyone, but religion—in the sense of the realization of unity—is something that is attained by only a few spiritually gifted souls. True "religion", therefore, is a spiritual revelation that comes only to those few who earnestly seek union with God; it is a gift of Grace. It may be called "enlightenment," "the mystic marriage," "the vision of God," or any number of other words or phrases. It is recognized by all religious faiths as a supernatural revelation of Truth that goes far beyond any and all doctrines or beliefs of religious faith.

Religious faiths are many; they are based for the most part on ideational interpretations of historical events. Religion, in the sense of *gnosis*, is neither ideational nor historical; it is beyond both time and the vagaries of the mind. Religion, by definition, seeks only the realization of one's unity with God, the revelation of the Eternal. Religious faith seeks intellectual certainty and temporal satisfaction, and always falls short of both. *Religion* brings certainty of the Truth; religious faiths are fallible, each one contrary to another. See how the various

religious faiths hold disparate views, each holding its own founders as well as its followers to be uniquely endowed with a cosmic and historical significance. Jews regard themselves to be “the chosen of God”; Christians regard their founder to be “the Son of God,” and themselves to be “saved” by that belief. Muslims regard Muhammed to be “the Messenger of God,” and his written words to be unerring and sacrosanct; Hindus regard Krishna to be an incarnation of God, and honor as sacred the rituals handed down in the Vedas; Buddhists worship the Buddha and his teachings as the preeminent and exclusive guide to enlightenment.

These are all examples of religious faith. Each is contrary to the other, and each regards its own followers as the only “true believers.” However, among the followers of each of these religious faiths, there are a few who have known “religion” or *gnosis*; i.e., who have experienced the unitive reality, and known their identity with the One. Such seers have existed and exist today among each of these religious faiths, attesting to a true “religion” that transcends as well as includes all religious faiths. Religion always fosters compassion, forbearance, and the recognition of the interconnected unity of all life. Religious faith is capable of promulgating absurdities; it is susceptible to ignorance and is capable of fostering activities directly contrary to the teachings of religion. In these recent days we have seen just how far afield such activities and absurdities can lead the followers of the religious faiths.

Scientists generally do not acknowledge that the noumenal Source of all manifestation is knowable; but there have been gnostics, myself among them, who have testified to their direct experiential knowledge of the noumenal, which they declare to be eternal. When the Eternal is revealed, they say, it is as though a grain of sand had shed its “grain-ness” and become aware of its “sand-ness”. “I am sand,” such a grain might proclaim; “I cover all the shores of the world.” Or, it is as though a speck of foam, thrown up by a crashing wave, suddenly shed its identity with its tiny form and became aware “I am the vast ocean. I am the fathomless deep!” When a man searches deeply enough within himself, his identity with a single form dissolves away, and he realizes a universal identity: “I am all life; I am all that comprises this universe!” And then, focused intently upon this new vision, he sees even more deeply into himself, and he realizes that he is the formless and eternally living Consciousness which, while remaining unmoved and unchanged, continuously whole and unaltering, spews forth all this moving, changing panoply of universal form, as a man’s mind creates a fantasy dream-world within itself.

Throughout history there have been a few who have declared that they have obtained mystical vision. Their testaments have been remarkably similar and

explicit regarding the ultimate Source of the manifested universe. Among these few the most authoritative on the subject of cosmogony (the origin of the universe) are the authors of a number of Upanishads, the author of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Shankara, Plotinus, and Meister Eckhart; although there are many others who may be considered authoritative regarding other specific aspects of the mystical vision.

The mystic is gifted with a visionary experience that comes to him without his knowing how. His consciousness is elevated during a rare moment of contemplation whereby his awareness reaches to a noumenal level beyond his normal experience, and at once he is privy to an egoless state in which the transcendent reality becomes evident. There are a couple of levels to this mystical experience: at first, he is aware of the absence of ownership of his body. The previous sense of an individual identity is gone, and he sees that his body is not the possession of an individuality but belongs to the one current of existence which is universal, an ocean of conscious energy in which all things and beings exist. He sees his body as a wave on that ocean, as a configuration of energy within a sea of energy, related to the universe as a pebble is to stone; as the mountains and valleys are to the earth.

He feels that, in being divested of an ego— that is, of an individual identity, he is now seeing himself and the world correctly; as though the veil of an illusory ego had been lifted, and now he is seeing truly and without the obfuscation of an erroneous orientation. He is like a scrap of wind in an infinite gale, like a wave on an infinite ocean, or like a golden trinket melted in a vat of gold. For a wave, the subsuming reality is the ocean; for a golden trinket, the subsuming reality is gold; for the individual consciousness, the subsuming reality is the one all-pervading Consciousness. No longer separate, his identity is merged into the larger substratum. If he entered this state from a state of prayer, there is no longer a deity, no longer an “I”; for, without the duality of “I” and “Thou”, neither exists. He sees that former dualistic relationship as a product of the ego-mind’s duality-producing habit. But now, all dualities are vanished. Not only is there no “I” or “Thou”, there is no now or then, for time is also transcended in this eternal state.

Dualities are judgments from a distinct individual reference point, and without that egocentric reference point, dualities do not exist. Without the ego, there is only the timeless universal sea of existence, a vast ocean of conscious energy. Without the ego, where is love and hate? Where are peace and unrest, the heights and the depths, weeping and laughing? Without an ego, there is no life and death, no night or day, no music or silence, no motion or stillness. These all require a point of identity, and without that illusory perspective, there is only the one universal existence. When what *is* is the one divine energy doing everything, where is pride

or regret? Furthermore, where is the distinction between body and soul? There is no division in this one conscious energy; it is homogeneous. There is only one. And this one existence is conscious, autonomous, and integrally coordinated.

This is the first stage in the mystical experience. When the ego-sense falls away, one is aware only of the creative energy that manifests as the phenomenal universe and all its constituent parts. The mystic witnesses this revealed universal energy, not as a subject perceiving an object, a second; he perceives it as himself. There is only One, and It is I. And as this awareness increases, a new clarity dawns as he reaches the second and ultimate stage of this introspective journey and realizes: 'I am not just this creative flux; I am the Source of this creative power. I am the eternal Consciousness from which this outflow of energy is born.' This eternal Consciousness is primary to the creative energy, lying just above it, and is its Source. There is no higher. And It is known as one's true Self, the one transcendent and noumenal Reality behind all universal manifestation.

That Self is Eternity. It is perfectly alone. It is perfect Consciousness and Bliss. There is nothing one can predicate of It. Yet, from that eternal Self a creative Energy fountains forth; from It time and space and the endless universe pours forth and returns in the same manner as breath flows out and returns in the case of a human being. It is a cyclic ebbing and flowing of the creative energy of the One which bursts into being like an exhaled breath, expanding and spreading, only to be reversed as in an inhalation, extinguishing what had previously been produced. The mystic experiences this as occurring from himself, since he is united, at one, with the one Self.

My own mystical experience came suddenly, and opened to me the initial awareness that I, my bodily self, was integral to the universal ocean of energy which is this cosmos. (For a description of the circumstances leading to this experience, please see my book, *The Supreme Self*.) I realized that I was not a separate being in the world, but a wave on that ocean of God's activity, and belonged to Him (the one Existence) and existed in Him. My sense of an individual identity (the ego) had vanished, and I was seeing my existence from the true perspective of one without a separate and distinct vantage point amidst the vast creative flux. As my vision expanded, I became aware of my deeper identity as the unmanifest Source of all manifestation, the one Consciousness, the sole Origin of all being. Whatever separate identity I entered that experience with had become transparent and vanished in the dawning awareness of myself as the eternal Consciousness Itself. I knew my true identity as the original One from whom all is derived; I was the unchanging and eternal Consciousness. Yet I was also aware of the cyclical outflow from Me of the universal array, in a motion

similar to the exhalation and inhalation of a breath. From the vantage of Eternity, it seemed that the creation and dissolution of the universe took place in the space of a leisurely breath. And its expansion and contraction could be seen in its entirety, as one might watch a balloon repeatedly expand and contract as one breathed into it.

Reflecting on this experience, it was clear that while the Eternal, the transcendent Absolute, which we will hereafter refer to as “the Godhead”, is, in Himself, beyond all activity, His Creative Power (the Divine Mind, or *Ishvara*) produces a universe of form and activity. The Creative Power of God (called in other traditions *Nous*, *Logos*, *Prakriti*, *Maya*, *Shakti*) is not different from God. It is His Power of creation and is in no way separate from Him. While He remains entirely alone in His transcendent purity and unchangeability, He projects the cosmic drama by His own inherent Power.

When we try to imagine such a dual state of being, we cannot, because, for us, such a paradoxical state is unimaginable. But, for the divine Self, the absolute Ground, or “Godhead”, such a paradoxical condition exists. In Himself, He is empty of thought or activity, pure Consciousness unmarred; and yet, He effortlessly “projects”, “emanates”, or “breathes forth” an *Energy* which transforms itself into an inconceivably complex universal drama in which stars explode, civilizations rise and fall, and human beings evolve to know within themselves the Source and Creator. And then, the entire expanding cosmos reverses its expansion and is drawn back into its unmanifest state, once again residing as pure potential in the pure Energy of the Creative Power of God. This cycle of creation/dissolution repeats itself endlessly. Yet, throughout this cosmic evolution and involution, He remains One, eternal, in His own Bliss.

While I have seen most clearly that the universe is “breathed out” by the great Consciousness, I have not seen into the particulars of it, but have seen only the wholeness of it from the perspective of Eternity. In that vision, the expansion and contraction of the universe occurs in the space of a breath. All those billions of earth-years required for the genesis, expansion, and subsequent reabsorption of the universe are crammed into an eternal overview which does not observe the tiny interactions of small particles, but rather sees the entirety only as a momentary universal expansion and contraction. Individual lives are not seen; the rising and falling of civilizations is not seen; the nativity and death of stars is not seen. From the vantage point of Eternity, it is like watching the spraying out of a breath, and its subsequent withdrawal. The details of its enactment are not seen, but only its broad-scale occurrence.

So, clearly, I cannot explain in anything remotely similar to scientific language the details of that appearance and disappearance of the universe. Its Source is, of course, the one eternal Consciousness (which we call “God”). He is eternal (He does not live in Eternity; He *is* Eternity), which means He is beyond time and space; and yet, He produces a universe of time and space, which, though it is not Himself, is a product of Himself, as our own breath is a product of each of us. It is a universe produced from Himself, since there is nothing else besides that One from which it could be composed. This universe, of which we are a part, appears to us as substance, but, as science has shown, it is a tenuous substance at best, made as it is of God-stuff, of divine Light. It is produced from the one Eternal, unmanifest, absolute Consciousness, and has but a transitory existence. After it is reabsorbed back into the Eternal, it is sent forth once again in what is apparently an interminably repeated cycle of becoming and dis-becoming, expanding and contracting.

My ultimate vision was one of identity with the Eternal, my original transcendent Source and ultimate being. I was able to see also, as mentioned above, the outflow and influx of the universal cosmos, but nothing of its manner of evolution. Some others may have direct knowledge of the subtle realms proceeding from the Creative Power of God, which in turn produces the material universe; but I do not. I wish very much that I could provide some insight into the process of this activity, but I cannot. His secret method will have, for the time being, to remain His secret. I can shed no light on the transformation from God-energy to formative “matter”, and so I am unable to definitively deflate the pride of the present-day physicists, with their hadrons and leptons and quarks of many colors.¹ Suffice it to say that, ultimately, all must be traced back to Him. Is it His play? His compulsion? His involuntary reflex? I cannot shed any light on His motivation or his purpose; except to say it seemed to me to be an expansion of His love or joy. I only know that I am His appearance, made of His light, and, for one brief space of time/eternity, He revealed Himself to me, and made me know that my existence is His existence. That is all I know, and probably all I shall ever need to know.

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NOTES:

1. In recent years, after this article was originally written in 2006, I have speculated in various writings that the divine breath of the Creator became manifest in time and space as a ‘Great Radiation’, a sudden powerful burst of high frequency electromagnetic radiation—at frequency levels in the *gamma* range or above—an occurrence which scientists refer to as ‘the Big Bang’.

That high-frequency electromagnetic radiation, or light, then spontaneously transformed into wave-particles that in turn aggregated to produce all the material forms that constitute our universe. This theory seems to me much more likely than the theories of a material origin of the universe put forward by contemporary science. It is explained at length and in detail in several of my later articles and book publications, including ‘The Phenomenon of Light’, ‘How God Made The World’, ‘Recent Theological Developments’, and ‘First Light’—all of which may be found in my collection of articles entitled “The Mystic’s Vision” at my website: www.themysticsvision.com.

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2. The Wonderful Enigma of Being (12-5-14)

Everyone knows the old conundrum: “If a tree falls in the forest, does it make a sound if there is no one to hear it?” The question is really about whether or not there is an objective reality that exists independent and regardless of our sense experience of it. This is precisely what Einstein and Neils Bohr argued about: Einstein asserting that there *is* an existent reality independent of its knowability, and Bohr arguing that the only reality is what we are able to know (i.e., observe), and that reality exists only in the consciousness of the knower. And while that argument is far from settled, the consensus of contemporary quantum physicists currently falls solidly on the side of Bohr.

To physicists studying the submicroscopic quantum reality in the early part of the twentieth century, it became apparent that one cannot separate existence (ontology) from knowing (epistemology), for the only means by which to agree among ourselves as to what exists is our sense experience of it. So, for physicists, existence is integrally tied up with knowing—i.e., observing. Likewise, there is no criterion by which to say: ‘the tree fell’, without someone having experienced it through their senses. From the scientific point of view, sensory knowledge, i.e., the confirmation of sight, hearing, smell, touch, etc., is regarded as the only acceptable criterion of “knowledge”. Knowledge obtained in this way is accepted as *empirical* knowledge. “Empiricism” is defined by Webster’s New World Dictionary as “(1) relying or based solely on experiment and observation [the empirical method] rather than theory; (2) relying or based on practical experience without reference to scientific principles.” In these sentences the sensory nature of “experiment,” “observation”, and “practical experience” is implied and understood.

The electron cannot be seen—even with a microscope. We cannot calculate *where* it is because, according to Heisenberg’s Principle of Indeterminacy, it is impossible to determine with accuracy both the position and momentum of an electron, as our means of observation inevitably alters either one or the other. And if it is impossible to know accurately where it is, where it’s heading, and at what speed, then that’s the end of science—or so it seemed in the early part of the twentieth century. This barrier to the determination of the exact whereabouts and activity of subatomic particles seemed to toll the death knoll for scientific investigation into the nature of matter and causality. It appeared to be the end of the story!

But some scientists were not satisfied to let that be the end. Using a mathematical formula devised by Erwin Schroedinger, scientists were able to calculate the *probable* location of an electron, using an algorithm called a ‘wave-function’.

With this calculation tool, the location of the electron could be generalized, and eventually accurately determined, but only by assuming, in the process, that the electron, prior to the determination of its actual location, is in a ‘superposed’ state in which it both exists and does not exist at any given point. This is simply the result of the probabilistic formula as it approaches the determination of the one actual location of the electron, or the so-called ‘collapse of the wave-function’. Prior to the collapse of the wave-function, the wave-particle under consideration does not technically *exist*, except as a *possible* (or superposed) state. Only when it is observed by a conscious observer may it be said to actually exist.¹

We must understand that the ‘superposed’ state is only a procedural necessity of the calculation formula and does not represent an actual (real) condition. We can either accept that we *cannot* know with certainty the location and momentum of an electron, and give up the search, *or* we can go through Schroedinger’s actuarial formula to determine its *probable* location—which turns out to be amazingly accurate in the end. The formula’s procedure does not actually place the electron in many places at once but places it *everywhere* only theoretically as a formulaic requirement. Also, we do not, by observing the actual location of the electron *cause* it to be at that location, though the procedure makes it appear that our conscious observation is a causal factor. It is only as a process of eliminating its being everywhere at once that we ‘collapse’ the wave-function and thus ‘cause’ a wave-particle to be where it really is. And since we cannot know what is actually going on with the particle, but only what we predict and observe, what we observe is therefore our only ‘reality’.

Quantum physics has effectively replaced the notion of *being* or *existing* (ontology) by that of *knowing* (epistemology). We can no longer discuss what *is*; we can only speak of what we are able to know. Now, the first thing we must know about waves and particles and the wave-particle duality is that waves and particles are not complementary realities; they are merely complementary *perspectives*—human *perspectives*—on the one indivisible Reality. Each is a valid perspective from one or another vantage point. It is only in that sense that they are complements, both perspectives contributing to the total information about—not Reality, but what is *knowable*.

In the early part of the twentieth century, the shift to a probabilistic quantum mechanics was wholly acceptable to physicists like Bohr and Heisenberg; others, like Einstein and Schrödinger, who despite having been so instrumental in the birth of quantum mechanics, were of the old school, and wanted to find another way—one that implied a reality that existed regardless of what was observed or not

observed. Nonetheless, in the area of science, a blurring of the line between *being* and *knowing* imperceptibly crept into our thinking. Because of that blurring, Heisenberg's 'principle of uncertainty', having to do with what we could *know*; in other words, epistemology, is nowadays taken to refer to what is; i.e., an ontological condition. The same is true of Schroedinger's 'wave-function': what had been intended as a tool for *knowing*, became a criterion for *being*. So that, instead of saying that a wave-particle's condition could not be *known* until it is measured, physicists today commonly declare that a wave-particle does not *exist* until it is measured (observed), since observation is the only recognized criterion for being.

For quite a long time now, the question of whether or not there is a universal reality independent of conscious observation has been seriously asked, not only by physicists, but by philosophers and metaphysicians as well. Is there really a world out there or does it exist only in our consciousness of it? Empirical science admits only the evidence of the senses, and so we must, if we side with the scientists, grant reality only to what is observable by the senses, or, like the theologians, we must put our faith in the existence of an absolute metaphysical reality that is intangible and undemonstrable.

This begs the question of whether the 'spiritual' reality that has been experienced extrasensually by so many mystics and sages is therefore unreal simply because it does not meet the empirical criteria of science. And the answer is 'No, it is not unreal.' Science operates on the principle that empirical knowledge is the *only* criterion for existence—not because it is necessarily so, but only because scientists have as yet discovered no other criteria for *determining* existence, or the *real*. But you may be sure that existence, or reality, is not limited by our ability to perceive it; it is, in fact, only our *knowledge* that is limited! It is merely our ability to perceive, to *know*, other dimensions of reality, other dimensions of existence, that is limited.

Happily, however, God has made Himself known to a few of us as the formless reality within us that is eternal and all-pervasive. It is the one conscious Source and substance of everything and lives as the divine Self of everyone. It is not experienced by the senses and is therefore unknowable by *science*; but it is knowable through an interior revelation in consciousness, or *gnosis*, revealed by divine Grace. God grants that revelation, that knowledge, that Grace, to those whom He finds worthy of it. May He grant it to you!

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NOTES:

1. The paradoxical nature of this circumstance is illustrated in the story of ‘Schroedinger’s Cat’, in which a cat is encased in a closed box with a bit of radioactive matter that *may* decay and poison the cat in the next few minutes. The paradox is that, after that time has passed, prior to the opening of the box, the cat is in a superposed state, neither alive nor dead, until the box is opened and the cat’s state is witnessed by a conscious observer. But how can a cat be neither alive nor dead? Well, in reality, it can’t, of course. But, in a word-game, in which *being observed* means *being*, it can.

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3. Consciousness And Matter (12-27-2014)

I. Consciousness

Humans meet reality on two fronts: the mental front and the physical front—what the ancient Greeks referred to as *Psyche* and *Cosmos*—or what we today might call the subjective and the objective realities. Another way of referring to these two fronts is as the realm of *Consciousness (Mind)*, and the realm of *Matter (Body)*. And so, if we are to give a full picture of our experience of reality, we must give an account of both its mental and its physical aspects. The mental aspect of our reality, or consciousness, is experienced as wavular; the physical, or material aspect of reality is experienced primarily as particulate. But, since Consciousness is the source and creator of Matter, every distinct particle of Matter also contains Consciousness; and so, Matter is both wavular and particulate, as is the Light from which Matter is made. There is one all-pervasive Consciousness, and the consciousness of every distinct individual is included in and partakes of it.

Consciousness is like an ocean in that it is a continuum that is wavular; in other words, it is capable of producing waves of consciousness in the form of thoughts. We are all familiar with the waves we produce in our consciousness, and we are familiar with the fact that waves, in whatever continuum, are formed of two opposing movements: a crest and a trough—each movement necessitating the other. This became clear to me during a ‘mystical’ experience that occurred when I was in my twenties:

The experience had begun as an intense prayer, and initially, while I was still identified with my separate self, I was addressing God as “Thou”; but when God’s grace revealed to me that I was merely a wave on the one ocean of Consciousness, and that He alone was the sole reality, I realized that, now, to speak the word, ‘Thou’, would be to re-establish duality. For I saw that, with the thought of ‘Thou’, I bring into existence at the same time, an ‘I’.¹ ‘I’ and ‘Thou’ are interdependent; there is no ‘Thou’ without an ‘I’, no ‘I’ without a ‘Thou’. The crest and trough of a single wave are opposing twins, two sides of one coin. It is the same with all such pairs of contraries: “I love and (thereby) create (its opposite) hatred; I am in peace, and am fashioning chaos; standing on the peak, I necessitate the depths.” All opposites occur as the crest and trough of a single wave. It is only in a continuum capable of producing waves that opposites necessitate one another in this manner. Thoughts, created in and of consciousness, are therefore undeniably wavular.

These waves of thought on the ocean of Consciousness produce duality, but Consciousness Itself, like an ocean, has no contrary to Itself, no opposite; It is the one substratum, the boundless and undivided ocean of Consciousness, and has no duality in It. Grace having revealed that ‘I’ and ‘Thou’ are merely the crest and trough of a wave of thought, both were resolved in the one ocean of Consciousness who alone exists absolutely. Then, the false ego-identification simply vanished, leaving only the one all-pervasive Consciousness aware of Itself; and in that expanded awareness, all became clear: “Now, weeping and laughing are gone; night is become day; music and silence are heard as one; my ears are all the universe.” In that moment beyond time, “All motion has ceased; everything continues. Life and death no longer stand apart (because that One contains everything—living or otherwise). No I, no Thou; no now, or then. Unless I move, there is no stillness (for stillness cannot be without movement).”

This is the realization of the one eternal ocean of Consciousness; It is *That* which has been called ‘God’, ‘the Absolute’, ‘the Unchanging Ground’, ‘the divine Self’. When it is known, It is known to be the ultimate Reality, the final irrefutable answer to the question, ‘Who am I?’. Anyone who has experienced the divine Self in this way will tell you that the experience at its peak does not last forever; but it is certainly transformative and lasting in its joyous certainty.

II. Matter

What, then, of the material universe that surrounds us and constitutes our bodily form? Theoretically, the universe of Matter is the result of an initiating eruption of high-frequency electromagnetic radiation, or Light, that occurred around fourteen billion years ago from the eternal Consciousness. That Light transformed into wave-particles, collected into atoms, molecules, gases, stars, and entire galaxies spread throughout this vast universe. The one eternal Consciousness, manifesting in this way as multiple forms within Itself, then imparted Its own awareness to these forms as Life and Consciousness, and multiplied.

Eventually, after the passing of a lengthy stretch of time, this universal expansion will reverse like the alteration of a breath, becoming a universal contraction; and all Matter will implode back to its energy state in the eternal Consciousness from which it originated, and the universal cycle will be repeated once again. That high-frequency Light which transforms into the fabric that we call *Matter* is woven of God’s Intelligence and Light. Scientists prefer to say that Matter is made of *wave-*

particles; but, of course, no one has ever seen a wave-particle. In fact, no such thing actually exists; ‘wave-particle’ is merely a statement of alternate possibilities.

Since the first half of the twentieth century, physicists have regarded both Light and Matter as possessing the contradictory but complementary properties of both waves and of particles. This has become well known as the Wave-Particle Duality (WPD), observable in physics experiments at the Quantum level. Equally well known is Werner Heisenberg’s Principle of Uncertainty (or Indeterminacy), which states the impossibility of simultaneously measuring both the position and momentum of a wave-particle. It now turns out that these two limitations on our ability to know and understand Matter are really one and the same! This astonishing discovery appears in detail in the December 19, 2014 edition of *Nature Communications*. International researchers Patrick Coles, Jędrzej Kaniewski, and Stephanie Wehner made the breakthrough while at the Centre for Quantum Technologies at the National University of Singapore. They found that ‘Wave-Particle Duality’ is simply the quantum ‘Uncertainty Principle’ in disguise.

An article describing this new understanding appears also in the PhysOrg Newsletter for December 19, 2014, and is entitled “Quantum Physics Just Got Less Complicated”.² It states:

The quantum uncertainty principle is the idea that it’s impossible to know two certain sets of information about a quantum particle at once. For example, the more precisely you know the position of an atom, the less precisely you can know the speed with which it’s moving. It’s a limit on the fundamental knowability of nature, not a statement on measurement skill. The new work shows that how much you can learn about the wave versus the particle behavior of a system is constrained in exactly the same way.

What’s really surprising about this discovery is that, for three quarters of a century, the entire scientific community has been widely discussing and utilizing in their experimental researches these two limitations on our ability to know, and yet no one before now even suspected that they were related, let alone that the Wave-Particle Duality was simply another manifestation of the principle of Indeterminacy. In fact, there was a great deal of speculation over the years by well-respected physicists that the Wave-Particle Duality referred, not to a merely *apparent* duality, but to an *actual* duality in the objective nature of light and material substance.

In the case of the experimental determination of whether an elemental constituent of matter behaves as a particle or a wave, as well as in the case of determining its position or its momentum, the very act of observing that constituent of Matter has the power to alter the experimental result. Whether the outcome of an experiment results in a wave or a particle, and/or whether its position or its momentum is measured, each outcome is wholly dependent upon the experimenter's intent, since in both cases, one kind of experiment will give one result, another kind of experiment will give another result.

In other words: If we perform an experiment that allows us to know the *position* of a wave-particle with some certainty, that experiment precludes the accurate knowledge of its *momentum* (velocity times mass); and if we perform an experiment that allows us to have accurate knowledge of the *momentum* of a wave-particle, that experiment precludes the accurate knowledge of its *position*. Similarly, if we perform an experiment that allows us to know the *particulate* nature of a wave-particle, that experiment precludes our knowing (observing) its *wavular* nature; and conversely, if we perform an experiment that allows us to know the wavular nature of a wave-particle, that experiment precludes our knowing (observing) its particulate nature. All of these limitations on our ability to know are described by Heisenberg's Principle of Indeterminacy, or Uncertainty. The question is 'what, if anything, does the unification of these two phenomena, previously thought to be separate and uniquely distinct, say about the nature of Matter that was not previously known?' To physicists, this new understanding places both of these limiting phenomena under the common umbrella of one mathematical formula; but that hardly tells us anything *new* about the nature of material reality. Despite all the words and the mathematical formulas, we remain as ignorant concerning the mysterious nature of Matter as we were before this mathematical unification.

All that we really know is that Matter, in its very tiniest forms, appears to us as either waves or particles. If we ask the question, 'Waves or particles of what?', we are back to the original electromagnetic impulses—elusively invisible forces created, governed, and coordinated by a transcendent Intelligence. That Intelligence that projects the Energy by which the material universe is formed is the same Intelligence, the one divine Consciousness, in which our individual consciousness exists. That one conscious Self, that Lord of the universe, is the ultimate Source of the progression of all causes—both mental and physical. He is the uncaused Cause, existing in Himself alone, remaining unaffected by all this busy world and all our mind-born creativity. And so, all enquiry comes to an end: we, with our material form and our conscious awareness, are projections of the one

divine Mind. We consist of Him and live in Him; He is the one reality, our own eternal Self.

The only question remaining is: ‘Can we give up our addiction to worry and doubt, our addiction to fear and fault-finding, and rest simply in the peace of God, our eternal Self? Can we accept our inability to know all the mysterious details of this material universe, and put all our trust and faith securely in God, knowing that we are upheld in His mercy, guided by His wisdom, enlivened by His breath, and made happy in His joy?’ Is it possible that such knowledge could be enough for us simple mortals? Can we learn to turn our gaze within, to quiet our own minds, purify our hearts, and know God as our own eternal Self? Yes, with His Grace, we can. Praise God.

* * *

NOTES:

1. See the account of my mystical experience in *The Supreme Self*, Fallsburg, N.Y., Atma Books, 1984. Or download the book or the excerpt “My Experience of Enlightenment” on my website at: www.themysticsvision.com.
2. See the article at: <http://phys.org/news/2014-12-quantum-physics-complicated.html>

* * *

4. A Wonderful New Science (5-16-14)

Over a century ago, the science of physics was revolutionized by the discovery that light and matter appear to behave both as waves and as particles. The long-standing question of whether the nature of light and matter was wavular or particulate had gone back and forth throughout the previous three centuries, the consensus now favoring one, now the other. But then, in the early twentieth century, the leading scientists in the field of theoretical physics were unanimous in declaring that matter and light evidenced *both* wavular and particulate properties—properties that alternately appeared, depending on how they were measured. Thereafter, for all practical purposes, waves and particles (quanta) were considered to be “complementary” ways of describing light and matter.

But even though the standard ‘Copenhagen’ interpretation considers this complementarity a fundamental property of the universe, there are others who think that the ambiguity lies not in the nature of light and matter but in the fundamental nature of human perception and measurement. There are yet others who believe that the universe consists of one single wave-propagating continuum—and that the appearance of light and matter as particulate is merely the effect of the countless number of ways of perceiving the distinguishable manifestations of that one continuum.¹ However, those scientists involved in practical experimental physics completely avoid dealing with the controversy simply by following the established mathematical formulas (involving the ‘collapse’ of the wave functions) that allow for whichever interpretation—wave or particle—that is called for; thereby leaving such theoretical questions regarding the ‘true’ nature of reality to more philosophically adventurous minds.

A distinctly more philosophically adventurous mind, that of David Bohm, gave expression to a ‘new’ conception of the universe in a 1975 article written with Basil Hiley. Here is a relevant portion of that article:

“The world which we perceive cannot properly be analyzed into independently existent parts with fixed and determinate dynamical relationships between each of the parts. Rather, the ‘parts’ are seen to be in immediate connection, in which their dynamical relationships depend, in an irreducible way, on the state of the whole system (and indeed on that of broader systems in which they are contained, extending ultimately and in principle to the entire universe). Thus, one is led to a new notion of unbroken wholeness which denies the

classical idea of analyzability of the world into separately and independently existent parts. We have reversed the usual classical notion that the independent ‘elementary parts’ of the world are the fundamental reality, and that the various systems are merely particular contingent forms and arrangements of these parts. Rather, we say that inseparable quantum inter-connectedness of the whole universe is the fundamental reality, and that relatively independently behaving parts are merely particular and contingent forms within this whole.”²

The ‘old’ way of conceiving the universe, I will remind you, regarded all the things, particles, and individual beings as separate independent objects and creatures that interacted in accordance with physical ‘laws’. The ‘new’ way of conceiving of the universe regards every particle, object, and living being as inseparably united in an integral conscious continuum of which all particles, things, and beings are constituted. Everything that once appeared to be random outcomes of merely blind forces, and governed by laws of probability, is now seen to be acting in harmonious accord within an “unbroken whole” conceived and contained within the one Mind, wherein “all things move together of one accord, and wherein assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.”

The most amazing and most wonderful aspect of this new way of seeing the universe is the recognition that every individual mind partakes of the one Mind and is capable not only of establishing a meaningful connection to the one Mind, but of actually experiencing its identity with that one all-pervasive Mind. For those to whom this identity has been revealed, all things and all beings are seen to be connected in an all-inclusive matrix of what some call ‘Spirit’, and others refer to as ‘Mind-stuff’; and all things are seen to be interrelated through one universal will or intention. Those who have experienced their own existence and the existence of all phenomena as manifestations of the one Spirit, the one immortal Mind, know with certainty that all identity is one. Such people, known as ‘mystics’, are yet few, but their numbers are growing, and one day the vision of a divine cosmos, existing within a divine Mind, will become the ‘standard model’ of a wonderful new science.

* * *

NOTES:

1. For more information, please see my article entitled “Complementary Perspectives” at my website: www.themysticsvision.com.

2. Bohm, David and Hiley, Basil, “On The Intuitive Understanding of Non-Locality as Implied By Quantum Theory”, London, Foundations of Physics journal, Vol. V, 1975, pp. 96, 102.

* * *

5. Homage To The Visionary Scientist, James Jeans (9-20-2013)

When I was a child in the late 1940's and early 1950's, many paperback books on popular science were published and were available at my local drugstore perched on revolving wire racks, usually for around 35 cents. There I was able to find, not only anthologies of the great philosophers, but also the latest books popularizing the scientific theories of George Gamow, Sir Arthur Eddington, James Jeans, and others.

One of the first acute observers to see the ‘writing on the wall’ implied in the observations of early twentieth century physics was British mathematician and astronomer, James Jeans (1877-1946). Long before it became evident to his peers, Jeans understood that Einstein's equations equalizing energy and matter meant that the material universe was nothing more than congealed light. In his book, *The Mysterious Universe*, published in 1931, he wrote:

The tendency of modern physics is to resolve the whole material universe into waves, and nothing but waves. These waves are of two kinds: bottled-up waves, which we call matter, and unbottled waves, which we call radiation or light. If annihilation of matter occurs, the process is merely that of unbottling imprisoned wave-energy and setting it free to travel through space. These concepts reduce the whole universe to a world of light, potential or existent, so that the whole story of its creation can be told with perfect accuracy and completeness in the six words: “God said, ‘*Let there be light*’.”¹

But the recognition that the material world was born of light was not the extent of Jeans' extrapolations on the revolutionary discoveries of physics in the early twentieth century. In that same book, he suggested that recent scientific discoveries show “that the stream of knowledge is heading toward a non-mechanical reality. *The universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine.* Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder into the realm of

matter; we are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it as *the creator and governor of the realm of matter*— not of course our individual minds, but the Mind in which the atoms (out of which our individual minds have grown) exist as thoughts.”²

“...The terrestrial pure mathematician does not concern himself with material substance but with pure thought. His creations are not only created by thought but are pure thought. ... And the concepts which now seem to be fundamental to our understanding of nature ... four-dimensional space, a space which expands forever; a sequence of events which follows the laws of probability instead of the laws of causation; all these concepts seem to my mind to be structures of pure thought. To my mind the laws which nature obeys are less suggestive of those which a machine obeys in its motion than those which a musician obeys in writing a fugue, or a poet in composing a sonnet. ... If all this is so, then the universe can best be pictured, although still very imperfectly and inadequately, as consisting of pure thought, the thought of what, for want of a wider word, we must describe as a mathematical thinker.”³

“If the universe is a universe of thought, then its creation must have been an act of thought. Indeed, the finiteness of time and space almost compel us, of themselves, to picture the creation as an act of thought. ...Modern scientific theory compels us to think of the creator as working outside time and space; which are part of his creation, just as the artist is outside his canvas. ... Indeed, the doctrine dates back as far as Plato: ‘Time and the heavens came into being at the same instant, in order that, if they were ever to dissolve, they might be dissolved together. Such was the mind and thoughts of God in the creation of time.’”⁴

Jeans had framed a new/old scientific paradigm—one in which the universe of time and space was the product of Thought, and the Thinker was transcendent to the Thought. But Jeans was a product of the long-enduring tradition of Western philosophical and religious dualism in which God and His Creation (Spirit and Matter, Thinker and Thought) were distinct and separate entities; and he was scarcely able to escape this old way of thinking, and to clearly enunciate the implications of this radical paradigm. Here, he suggests that the Thinker/Creator is *outside* the Thought/Creation in the same way that an artist is *outside* his canvas. He fails to realize that, just as in the case of our personal minds the thoughts exist *within* our minds, so must the universal Thought exist *within* the Divine Mind. The Thinker transcends the Thought, to be sure; but He is not “outside of” or separate

from the Thought, but rather encompasses the Thought/Creation and fashions it to His own Will.

Then, in 1934, when Jeans was the President of the British Association For The Advancement of Science, he delivered an Address to that Association in Aberdeen, Scotland, entitled “The New World-Picture of Modern Physics”, in which he explained more fully his position. Here is a brief excerpt from that lecture:

“When geography cannot combine all the qualities we want in a single map, it provides us with more than one map. Theoretical physics has done the same, providing us with two maps which are commonly known as the particle-picture and the wave-picture. It is perhaps better to speak of these two pictures as the particle-parable and the wave-parable.

“The particle-parable, which was first in the field, told us that the material universe consists of particles existing in space and time. It was created by the labors of chemists and experimental physicists, working on the basis provided by the classical physicist. Its time of testing came in 1913, when Bohr tried to find out whether the two particles of the hydrogen atom could possibly produce the highly complicated spectrum of hydrogen by their motion. He found a type of motion which could produce this spectrum down to its minutest details, but the motion was quite inconsistent with the mechanistic determinism of the Newtonian mechanics. The electron did not move continuously through space and time, but jumped, and its jumps were not governed by the laws of mechanics, but to all appearance, as Einstein showed more fully four years later, by the laws of probability. Of 1000 identical atoms, 100 might make the jump, while the other 900 would not. Before the jumps occurred, there was nothing to show which atoms were going to jump. Thus, the particle-picture conspicuously failed to provide an answer to the question ‘What will happen next?’

“The wave-parable serves this purpose; it does not describe the universe as a collection of particles but as a system of waves. The universe is no longer a deluge of shot from a battery of machine-guns, but a stormy sea with the sea taken away and only the abstract quality of storminess left— or the grin of the Cheshire cat if we can think of a grin as undulatory. This parable was not devised by Heisenberg, but by de Broglie and Schrödinger. At first, they thought their waves merely provided a superior model of an ordinary electron; later it was established that they were a sort of parable to explain Heisenberg’s pseudo-electron.

“In this way we have the two co-existent pictures—the particle-picture for the materialist, and the wave-picture for the determinist. When the cartographer has to make two distinct maps to exhibit the geography of, say, North America, he is able to explain why two maps are necessary, and can also tell us the relation between the two; he can show us how to transform one into the other. He will tell us, for instance, that he needs two maps simply because he is restricted to flat surfaces—pieces of paper. Give him a sphere instead, and he can show us North America, perfectly and completely, on a single map.

“The physicist has not yet found anything corresponding to this sphere; when, if ever, he does, the particle-picture and the wave-picture will be merged into a single new picture. At present some kink in our minds, or perhaps merely some ingrained habit of thought, prevents our understanding the universe as a consistent whole.

“The old physics imagined it was studying an objective nature which had its own existence independently of the mind which perceived it— which, indeed, had existed from all eternity whether it was perceived or not. It would have gone on imagining this to this day, had the electron observed by the physicists behaved as on this supposition it ought to have done.

“But it did not so behave, and this led to the birth of the new physics, with its general thesis that the nature we study does not consist so much of something we perceive as of our perceptions; it is not the object of the subject-object relation, but the relation itself. There is, in fact, no clear-cut division between the subject and object; they form an indivisible whole which now becomes nature. This thesis finds its final expression in the wave-parable, which tells us that nature consists of waves and that these are of the general quality of waves of knowledge, or of absence of knowledge, in our own minds.

“Let me digress to remind you that if ever we are to know the true nature of waves, these waves must consist of something we already have in our own minds. Now knowledge and absence of knowledge satisfy this criterion as few other things could; waves in an ether, for instance, emphatically did not. It may seem strange, and almost too good to be true, that nature should in the last resort consist of something we can really understand; but there is always the simple solution available that the external world is essentially of the same nature as mental ideas.

“Again, we may begin to feel that the new physics is little better than the old— that it has merely replaced one determinism by another. It has; but there is all the difference in the world between the two determinisms. For in the old physics the perceiving mind was a spectator; in the new it is an actor. Nature no longer forms a closed system detached from the perceiving mind; the perceiver and perceived are interacting parts of a single system. The nature depicted by the wave-picture in some way embraces our minds as well as inanimate matter. Things still change solely as they are compelled, but it no longer seems impossible that part of the compulsion may originate in our own minds.

“What remains is in any case very different from the full-blooded matter and the forbidding materialism of the Victorian scientist. His objective and material universe proved to consist of little more than constructs of our own minds. To this extent, then, modern physics has moved in the direction of philosophic idealism. Mind and matter, if not proved to be of similar nature, are at least found to be ingredients of one single system. There is no longer room for the kind of dualism which has haunted philosophy since the days of Descartes.

“The old particle-picture which lay within the limits of space and time, broke matter up into a crowd of distinct particles, and radiation into a shower of distinct photons. The newer and more accurate wave-picture, which transcends the framework of space and time, recombines the photons into a single beam of light, and the shower of parallel-moving electrons into a continuous electric current. Atomicity and division into individual existences are fundamental in the restricted space-time picture, but disappear in the wider, and as far as we know more truthful, picture which transcends space and time. In this, atomicity is replaced by what General Smuts would describe as ‘holism’: the photons are no longer distinct individuals each going its own way, but members of a single organization or whole— a beam of light.

“The same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of the electrons of a parallel-moving shower. The biologists are beginning to tell us, although not very unanimously, that the same may be true of the cells of our bodies. And is it not conceivable that what is true of the objects perceived may be true also of the perceiving minds? When we view ourselves in space and time we are quite obviously distinct individuals; when we pass beyond space and time we may perhaps form ingredients of a continuous stream of life. It is only a

step from this to a solution of the problem which would have commended itself to many philosophers, from Plato to Berkeley, and is, I think, directly in line with the new world-picture of modern physics.”⁵

Then, in his book, *Physics And Philosophy*, published in 1942, Jeans continued explaining this concept of a Mind-based universe which, he felt, was the inescapable conclusion to be derived from the newest discoveries in physics. Here are a few excerpts from that book:

“A ...revolution has occurred in physics in recent years. Its consequences extend far beyond physics, and in particular they affect our general view of the world in which our lives are cast. In a word, they affect philosophy. The philosophy of any period is always largely interwoven with the science of the period, so that any fundamental change in science must produce reactions in philosophy. This is especially so in the present case, where the changes in physics itself are of a distinctly philosophical hue; a direct questioning of nature by experiment has shown the philosophical background hitherto assumed by physics to have been faulty. The necessary emendations have naturally affected the scientific basis of philosophy and, through it, our approach to the philosophical problems of everyday life. Are we, for instance, automata or are we free agents capable of influencing the course of events by our volitions? Is the world material or mental in its ultimate nature? Or is it both? If so, is matter or mind the more fundamental? Is mind a creation of matter or matter a creation of mind? Is the world we perceive in space and time the world of ultimate reality, or is it only a curtain veiling a deeper reality beyond?”

Mechanical Explanations of Nature

“Explanations which introduce tactile ideas— forces, pressures and tensions— are of course dynamical or mechanical in their nature. It is not surprising that such explanations also should have been attempted from Greek times on, for, after all, our hairy ancestors had to think more about muscular force than about perfect circles or geodesics. Plato tells us that Anaxagoras claimed to be able to explain the workings of nature as a machine. In more recent times Newton, Huygens and others thought that the only possible explanations of nature were mechanical. Thus in 1690 Huygens wrote: ‘In true philosophy, the causes of all natural phenomena are conceived in mechanical terms. We must do this, in my opinion, or else give up all hope of ever understanding anything in physics.’

“Today the average man probably holds very similar opinions. An explanation in any other than mechanical terms would seem incomprehensible to him, as it did to Newton and Huygens, through the necessary ideas— the language in which the explanation was conveyed—not being in his mind. When he wants to move an object, he pulls or pushes it through the activity of his muscles, and he cannot imagine that Nature does not cause her movements in a similar way. Among attempted explanations in mechanical terms, the Newtonian system of mechanics stands first. This was supplemented in due course by various mechanical representations of the electromagnetic theories of Maxwell and Faraday. All envisaged the world as a collection of particles moving under the pushes and pulls of other particles, these pushes and pulls being of the same general nature as those we exert with our muscles on the objects we touch.

“We shall see later in the present book how these and other attempted mechanical explanations have all failed. Indeed, the progress of science has disclosed in detail the reasons why all failed, and all must fail. Two of the simpler of these reasons may be mentioned here.

“The first is provided by the theory of relativity. The essence of a mechanical explanation is that each particle of a mechanism experiences a real and definite push or pull. This must be objective as regards both quantity and quality, so that its measure will always be the same, whatever means of ‘measurement’ are employed to measure it just as a real object must always weigh the same whether it is weighed on a spring balance or on a weighing-beam. But the theory of relativity shows that if motions are attributed to forces, these forces will be differently estimated, as regards both quantity and quality, by observers who happen to be moving at different speeds, and furthermore that all their estimates have an equal claim to be considered right. Thus, the supposed forces cannot have a real objective existence; they are seen to be mere mental constructs which we make for ourselves in our efforts to understand the workings of nature.

“...A second reason is provided by the theory of quanta. A mechanical explanation implies not only that the particles of the universe move in space and time, but also that their motion is governed by agencies which operate in space and time. But the quantum theory finds, as we shall see later, that the fundamental activities of nature cannot be represented as occurring in space and time; they cannot, then, be mechanical in the ordinary sense of the word.

“In any case, no mechanical explanation could ever be satisfying and final; it could at best only postpone the demand for an explanation. For suppose— to imagine a simple although not very likely possibility— that it had been found that the pattern of events could be fully explained by assuming that matter consisted of hard spherical atoms, and that each of these behaved like a minute billiard-ball. At first this may look like a perfect mechanical explanation, but we soon find that it has only introduced us to a vicious circle; it first explains billiard-balls in terms of atoms, and then proceeds to explain atoms in terms of billiard-balls, so that we have not advanced a step towards a true understanding of the ultimate nature of either billiard-balls or atoms. All mechanical explanations are open to a similar criticism, since all are of the form ‘A is like B, and B is like A’. Nothing is gained by saying that the loom of nature works like our muscles if we cannot explain how our muscles work. We come, then, to the position that nothing but a mechanical explanation can be satisfying to our minds, and that such an explanation would be valueless if we attained it. We see that we can never understand the true nature of reality.

The Mathematical Description of Nature

“In these and similar ways, the progress of science has itself shown that there can be no pictorial representation of the workings of nature of a kind which would be intelligible to our limited minds. The study of physics has driven us to the positivist conception of physics. We can never understand what events *are* but must limit ourselves to describing the pattern of events in mathematical terms; no other aim is possible— at least until man becomes endowed with more senses than he at present possesses. Physicists who are trying to understand nature may work in many different fields and by many different methods; one may dig, one may sow, one may reap. But the final harvest will always be a sheaf of mathematical formulae. These will never describe nature itself, but only our observations on nature. Our studies can never put us into contact with reality; we can never penetrate beyond the impressions that reality implants in our minds.

“Although we can never devise a pictorial representation which shall be both true to nature and intelligible to our minds, we may still be able to make partial aspects of the truth comprehensible through pictorial representations or parables. As the whole truth does not admit of intelligible representation, every such pictorial representation or parable must fail somewhere. The physicist of the last generation was continually making pictorial

representations and parables, and also making the mistake of treating the half-truths of pictorial representations and parables as literal truths. He did not see that all the concrete details of his picture— his luminiferous ether, his electric and magnetic forces, and possibly his atoms and electrons as well— were mere articles of clothing that he had himself draped over the mathematical symbols; they did not belong to the world of reality, but to the parables by which he had tried to make reality comprehensible. For instance, when observation was found to suggest that light was of the nature of waves, it became customary to describe it as undulations in a rigid homogeneous ether which filled the whole of space. The only ascertained fact in this description is contained in the one word ‘undulations’, and even this must be understood in the narrowest mathematical sense; all the rest is pictorial detail, introduced to help out the limitations of our minds.

“...To sum up, physics tries to discover the pattern of events which controls the phenomena we observe. But we can never know what this pattern means or how it originates; and even if some superior intelligence were to tell us, we should find the explanation unintelligible. Our studies can never put us into contact with reality, and its true meaning and nature must be forever hidden from us.”⁶

Sir James Jeans was indeed a visionary scientist in that he was able to see a truth that few others had seen, and he made that truth credible to others through his lucid writings. The mystic’s vision confirms and verifies that truth which Jeans came to solely through physics and philosophy, enabling us all to enthusiastically extol the fact that the Great Mind is indeed “*the creator and governor of the realm of matter*”, and proclaim that Divine Mind in which we live and move as the one and only reality to be adored as our own divine Self.

NOTES:

1. Sir James Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe*, New York, Macmillan Co., 1931, pp. 83-84.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 158
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.
5. James Jeans’ 1934 Aberdeen Address may be found at:
http://www-history.mcs.st-and.ac.uk/history/Extras/BA_1934_J1.html
6. James Jeans, *Physics And Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 1942, may be found at:

http://www-history.mcs.st-and.ac.uk/history/Extras/Jeans_Part_I.html

* * *

6. David Bohm's Implicate Order

(2007; rev. 5-11--2016)

Relativity and, even more important, quantum mechanics have strongly suggested (though not proved) that the world cannot be analyzed into separate and independently existing parts. Moreover, each part somehow involves all the others: contains them or enfolds them... This fact suggests that the sphere of ordinary material life and the sphere of mystical experience have a certain shared order and that this will allow a fruitful relationship between them. ¹

--- David Bohm

According to the mystics who have seen into the nature of reality, the one absolute Consciousness—whom we usually refer to as ‘God’—is the Source and Cause of all phenomena, manifesting the universe by His Creative Power in a manner similar to the way an individual mind projects a thought. This Divine Thought contains implicit within it the conscious Intelligence of the Source; and implicit in it also is the entire design and evolution of the universe, from its initial coming into being to all the refinements and transformations necessary in the process of its ultimate evolutionary development. Science does not recognize such a scenario as tenable and relegates the visionary knowledge of the mystics to the category of speculative metaphysics. However, one brave scientist stepped forward to acknowledge the possibility that the mystic’s vision could provide a basis for a true and consistent scientific worldview; his name is David Bohm.

David Bohm (1917-1992) was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania on December 20, 1917. His father was a Jewish furniture dealer, but David went to college, receiving his B.Sc. degree from Pennsylvania State College in 1939 and his Ph.D. in physics at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1943. At U.C. Berkeley, he studied with Robert Oppenheimer; and when Oppenheimer went to Los Alamos to work on the “Manhattan Project”, Bohm remained at Berkeley as a research physicist. There, he worked on the Theory of Plasma and on the Theory of

Synchrotrons and Syndrocyclotrons until 1947, when he took a position as an Assistant Professor at Princeton University, working on Plasmas, Theory of Metals, Quantum Mechanics and Elementary Particles. It was there he met and had regular meetings with Albert Einstein.

In 1949, during the repressive McCarthy era, Bohm was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee, and he was asked to testify against Robert Oppenheimer who was being accused of Communist sympathies. Bohm refused to testify, and he was thereafter tried and acquitted. But the damage had been done; he was fired from his position at Princeton University, and was unable to find work in this country. He then moved to Brazil where he taught briefly at the University of Sao Paulo. He also taught for a brief time in Israel before moving to Bristol, England in 1957. In 1961, he became professor of physics at the Birkbeck College of the University of London, and remained there for the next 30 years, writing and publishing his several books: *Causality and Chance in Modern Physics* (1957), *The Special Theory of Relativity* (1966), *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (1980), and *Science, Order and Creativity* (1987). David Bohm died in 1992.

In the 1950's David Bohm was widely considered one of the most talented and promising physicists of his generation. But his primary work from the 1950's to the 1990's—the ongoing development of his “causal interpretation” (which he later referred to as an “ontological interpretation”) of quantum mechanics as an alternative to the standard ‘Copenhagen Interpretation’—was met with dismissive hostility by the majority of the world physics community. In an attempt to provide a scientific formulation of quantum physics consistent with the mystic's vision of a Divine source and manifestation of our world, Bohm presented in his book, *Wholeness And The Implicate Order*, his fully developed theories.

The first part of his book's title, “*Wholeness*”, was a theme that grew out of his long familiarity with Quantum Physics. Ordinarily, when we seek for causes of isolated events or things, we settle arbitrarily on a preceding local event or state which we designate as the *cause* of the present event or state. But, as scientific investigations tend to show, the internal web of relationships between events and between things is endless. From the point of view expressed by the mystics, and by David Bohm, isolated things and events are not caused by other things and events but are rather linked in a complex web of relationships within a larger common Whole whose nature in turn determines the nature of those constituent things and events. In other words, the material reality is no longer thought to be the independent bits of which the Whole is constituted, but rather the other way

around: the overall condition of the universal Whole governs the functions and interrelations of all constituent parts within the Whole.

Here is how Bohm and his co-author, Basil Hiley, explained, in a 1975 article, this understanding:

The world which we perceive cannot properly be analyzed into independently existent parts with fixed and determinate dynamical relationships between each of the parts. Rather, the ‘parts’ are seen to be in immediate connection, in which their dynamical relationships depend, in an irreducible way, on the state of the whole system (and indeed on that of broader systems in which they are contained, extending ultimately and in principle to the entire universe). Thus, one is led to a new notion of unbroken wholeness which denies the classical idea of analyzability of the world into separately and independently existent parts. We have reversed the usual classical notion that the independent ‘elementary parts’ of the world are the fundamental reality, and that the various systems are merely particular contingent forms and arrangements of these parts. Rather, we say that inseparable quantum inter-connectedness of the whole universe is the fundamental reality, and that relatively independently behaving parts are merely particular and contingent forms within this whole. ²

The second part of his book’s title, “*The Implicate Order*”, referred to his suggestion, inspired by the mystic’s vision, that the phenomenal world “unfolded from an “enfolded order” in a noumenal Source, referring to these two as “the implicate order” and “the explicate order”.

According to his theory, *the implicate order* is an invisible substratum containing the archetypal template for the emergence and dynamic unfoldment of both matter and consciousness, much the way an individual’s mind is the archetypal template of conscious thoughts produced from it. And in his wonderfully lucid writings Bohm endeavored to explain how the *explicate order* (this perceived phenomenal universe) has its source in and unfolds from an (invisible) implicate, or enfolded order. The implicate order implicitly contains the explicate order, and the explicate order explicitly manifests the implicate order.

Bohm theorized that, in the implicate order, all things—matter as well as consciousness, body as well as mind—are integrally interconnected in a way that transcends space and time. This is because the implicate order is a noumenal

substratum resembling a transcendent Thought-matrix which generates, forms, and organizes the constituents of the explicate order. Quanta appear wavelike until they are observed; that is, witnessed by a conscious observer. Then they appear to those observers as particles; i.e., individualized ‘things’. Bohm suggests that this wave/particle complementarity can be explained by the implicate-explicate order duality: The implicate order is one indivisible continuum consisting of waves; the explicate order is perceived by the human consciousness as particulate, individualized.

Together, the implicate order and the explicate order comprise what Bohm regards as *the holomovement*, which he describes as “the unbroken wholeness of the totality of existence as an undivided flowing movement without borders”.³ In the mystic’s vision, the origin of the Whole (the ultimate Cause), is found to reside in the divine Mind (the implicate order), and in principle in its causal precedent, the transcendent Absolute Being. But in David Bohm’s ontological theory, nowhere is there any indication of a primary origin for this “undivided flowing movement”. However, he does suggest that the ultimate source of the *holomovement* might include a “superimplicate order”, which in turn may result from a “super-superimplicate order”, and so on indefinitely. In his theory, he does not explicitly define these possible primary causal orders, but ultimately, underlying all noumenal implicate orders, there must presumably be an Origin, an eternal Intelligence, or Divine Ground, something along the lines of the Absolute, or “One”, of Neoplatonism. But Bohm, as a scientist dedicated to the empirical method, seems to prefer to remain wholly noncommittal regarding the nature of any primary supernatural cause.

For the mystic, informed by direct visionary experience, the perceivable phenomenal world is the manifestation of the creative Energy of God. At the root of that creative Energy is the divine Source (what Plotinus called *Nous*, “the Divine Mind”), whose ultimate root is the “One”, the ineffable Absolute that is the Godhead. It is the Divine Mind that extends Itself by way of Its Creative Energy to the entire universe. The Divine Mind is inherent and implicit in Its own Energy, and so It fills all animate and inanimate beings, to varying degrees according to their evolution, with Its own Consciousness and Joy. Thus, the manifested beings, who are the evolutes of Its Energy, are able to know within themselves Its being, Its freedom, Its Consciousness, Its Joy. They are able to transcend in mind the limitations of the egocentricity imposed on them in the process of manifestation and ascend in consciousness to the very being of God, knowing Him as their own original and authentic Self.

In that mystical ascension to the Divine Mind (which Bohm refers to as *the implicate order*), the manifest beings become able to perceive the perfection of the universal manifestation in which all created things are linked in a wonderful unity of being and becoming.⁴ Like the atoms in a cresting wave, or in the flowering of a rose, they are welded together in a synchronous dance of movement toward their intended evolutionary culmination. How vast and perfect in every way is their dance! It is indescribably wonderful! In the mystic's vision the unfolding of the universe, and all that unfoldment entails, is seen to be a coordinated and integrated presentation wherein "all things move together of one accord;" and "assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain."

If David Bohm experienced at some time in his career such a mystical revelation, I have not been able to find any mention of it. Nonetheless, his exposition of "The Implicate Order" evinces many similarities to the direct perceptions frequently reported by numerous mystics. In David Bohm's broad suppositional proposition, causality is seen to reside in the ideational substratum (the implicate order), and then becomes manifest in all its effusive multiplicity as a universe of time and space (the explicate order). Small-scale causes in the explicate order are deemed irrelevant, as they are merely expressions of an implicit order. And, while this 'ontological interpretation' of David Bohm's is a marvelous restatement of the expressed vision of the mystic, it remains, from the standpoint of science, merely another speculative philosophy, unprovable (unfalsifiable) by science's criterion of proof. Bohm's work remains ground-breaking proof, however, that gnosis is a fruitful source for scientific investigation and understanding. Perhaps other scientists will follow the path he has shown, expanding on his vision, and bringing us closer to a science that corresponds with the declarations of revelation proffered by the gnostics (mystics) of every generation.

* * *

NOTES:

1. Bohm, David; quoted in Friedman, Norman, *Bridging Science And Spirit*, St. Louis, Missouri, Living Lake Books, 1994; p. 95.
2. Bohm, David and Hiley, Basil, "On The Intuitive Understanding of Non-Locality as Implied By Quantum Theory", London, Foundations of Physics journal, Vol. V, 1975; pp. 96, 102.
3. (David Bohm, *Wholeness And The Implicate Order*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, p. 172).

4. The mystical experience is frequently referred to as “the unitive experience” because it reveals the identity of the experienter to be identical with the one all-pervasive reality; i.e., it reveals that ‘I and the Father are one.’ This nondual experience occurs because the mystical experience is a revelation of the subtle level of reality, what Plotinus called *Nous*, (the Divine Mind), or what David Bohm calls ‘the implicate order’. Previous to the “unitive experience”, the ‘explicate order’, which had been the experienter’s former “reality”, appeared to consist of separate individual things and beings in a world of incredible diversity and multiplicity of identities. But now, suddenly awakened to this subtle level of reality, there is but one identity spreading everywhere; ‘I’ am in the clouds and in the gritty soil; ‘I’ am the pulse of the turtle; ‘I’ am the clanging bells of joy. In that implicate order, one ‘I’ is all-pervasive, constituting the one and only identity everywhere.

* * *

7. How Science Got It All Wrong (6-23-14)

Though it may be surprising to some, there is no scientific theory of the ultimate source of the universe. Science, and in particular, that branch called ‘physics’, takes an ‘I don’t know’ attitude to questions about an ‘ultimate source’, and holds that nothing is known about what happened prior to ‘the Big Bang’ of fourteen billion years ago heralding the ‘beginning’ of time, space and the material universe. As to what sparked (caused) ‘the Big Bang’, there is no consensus theory among scientists; but there is a tacit assumption by the scientific and academic community that, whatever it was, it was solely ‘material’; and that from that material source all else spontaneously evolved. ‘All else’ includes all life, human consciousness and intelligence, and all things mental—though no one has suggested any possible manner in which any of these could have spontaneously evolved from matter. Despite the many inconsistencies and overall implausibility of Science’s assumptions, its materialistic bias has permeated our secular society, and greatly molds and influences the ideology and temper of our times.

Theology, in opposition to Science, holds that the fundamental origin of this universe is the universal Consciousness, or God. In fact, they say, it is not possible to conceive of a universal beginning without there being first that beginningless Consciousness. Nothing could exist or come into existence, they say, without a

Source that is capable of creating and containing all matter and all energy, while transcending these in Itself. Nothing in this universe could exist or come into existence, they say, without a Source that is capable of creating and encompassing both time and space, and yet is itself neither. And while Science's materialistic account of the universe's origin does not provide for the sudden spontaneous production of life and human consciousness, Theology's account does: Before 'the beginning' was The Beginningless. That eternal Consciousness produced from Itself a sufficient amount of form-producing energy (at the Big Bang) to fashion an expanding and evolving universe containing many worlds; and all were made of and contained in that one Consciousness. Life, human consciousness and intelligence arose quite naturally within this living, conscious, universe. And, since all is made of Consciousness and is coordinated in one conscious Whole, all things move together of one accord; and assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain. This quantum interconnectedness evidenced throughout the universe is clearly explained in the account of Theology, and though this phenomenon is recognized by the representatives of materialistic Science, there is no plausible explanation of it in their account of reality.

Let us hope that, in future years, the current advocates of materialistic Science begin to consider the possibility that the more plausible Theological paradigm is the correct one, and no doubt, some of their current mysteries and conundrums will be immediately solved, and the universe as it truly is will begin to make sense to them.

* * *

8. The Coincidence of Science And Mysticism (2012; revised 10-11-17)

I.

We have all become somewhat accustomed to the picture of the world presented to us by modern physics which asks us to accept that the world consists of either particles or of waves—depending on how we decide to analyze it. Suffice it to say that, in some experiments the world of both light and matter prove to be particulate; and in some experiments the world of both light and matter prove to be wavular. This empirical ambiguity is so prevalent in the field of physics that we now refer to the constituents of both light and matter as “wave-particles”, acknowledging their complementarity, while ignoring the clearly contradictory

nature of the term and its meaning.

Reality, as we all know, is one; and yet it can appear to be divisible into individually distinct and separate perceivable entities or appear as waves on a single continuum in which there is no separation between subject and object. Back in the 1930's, many were pondering these two 'versions' of reality which physics had discovered were complementary but irreconcilable descriptions of the reality we experience—among them the highly respected mathematician and dabbler in physics, James Jeans (1877-1946). Jeans couldn't help noting that these two complementary versions of reality were radically dissimilar:

“When geography cannot combine all the qualities we want in a single map, it provides us with more than one map. Theoretical physics has done the same, providing us with two maps which are commonly known as the particle-picture and the wave-picture. It is perhaps better to speak of these two pictures as the particle-parable and the wave-parable.

“The particle-parable, which was first in the field, told us that the material universe consists of particles existing in space and time.

“...The wave-parable ... does not describe the universe as a collection of particles but as a system of waves. ... [In this parable,] the universe is no longer a deluge of shot from a battery of machine-guns, but a stormy sea with the sea taken away and only the abstract quality of storminess left...”¹

“The old particle-picture which lay within the limits of space and time, broke matter up into a crowd of distinct particles, and radiation into a shower of distinct photons. The newer and more accurate wave-picture, which transcends the framework of space and time, recombines the photons into a single beam of light, and the shower of parallel-moving electrons into a continuous electric current. Atomicity and division into individual existences are fundamental in the restricted space-time picture, but disappear in the wider, and as far as we know more truthful, picture which transcends space and time. In this, atomicity is replaced by ... ‘holism’: the photons are no longer distinct individuals each going its own way, but members of a single organization or whole— a beam of light.

“...And is it not conceivable that what is true of the objects perceived may be true also of the perceiving minds? When we view ourselves in space and time we are quite obviously distinct individuals; when we pass beyond space and time we may perhaps form ingredients of a continuous stream of life.”²

It suddenly struck me, in reading this description of the Wavular version of reality, that this is a description of ‘the mystical experience’ that occurred to me in my cabin in the woods in 1966.³ I had experienced a shift in consciousness from what I regarded as the ‘normal’ version of reality into another, unfamiliar, version of reality. But what does that even mean? What is ‘another version of reality’? Is there more than one reality? You see, there has been no vocabulary other than that of religion with which to describe the Nondual reality in which one finds oneself in this so-called ‘mystical’ experience—until now. Perhaps we must look to the vocabulary of the physicists to comprehend and explain it!

In order to understand these two complementary ways of viewing the universe from the perspective of the scientists, let’s look at the characteristics, the qualities, of these two ‘versions’ of reality and see in what ways they differ. First, the Particulate, or ‘corpuscular’ version:

The Particulate (Dualist) Version of Reality

1. Here, each perceiving subject and each perceived object possesses a unique identity, each individual subject or object being distinct from any other.
 2. Here, every perceiving subject and perceived object consists of smaller units, referred to, in sequence, as molecules, atoms, and sub-atomic particles.
 3. Here, the consciousness of each subject perceives, in addition to the subject-object duality, a self-created duality of values, emotions, qualities, consisting of pairs, such as like-dislike, happy-sad, pleased-displeased, etc.
 4. Here, both subjective and objective events occur within the parameters of time and space. Within these parameters, each perceiving subject (soul?) is born, matures, and eventually dies (perhaps to reincarnate at a later time).
 5. Here, the struggle for individual existence sets creature against creature according to the diversity of self-interest and motive.
-

That is the Particle Version of Reality. And now, the ‘version’ of reality into which I shifted during my ‘mystical’ experience:

The Wavular (Nondual) Version of Reality

1. Here, only one limitless continuum of Consciousness exists, containing within It all phenomena, including one’s own body, consisting of waves in the continuum.

2. Here, all wavular phenomena consist of and are manifestations of the one continuum, having no distinct identity of their own.
 3. Here, consciousness experiences itself as the one continuum. There is only the One, with no division anywhere.
 4. Here, what is experienced is one's eternal Self. Time and space do not exist. All that occurs is the correlation and natural evolution of the waves of the one integrated (spiritual) continuum.
 5. Here, all the wavular phenomena move together of one accord, one harmony, one purpose.
-

In 1966, when I was sitting in my cabin before the fire in the stove, I was experiencing 'reality', as all of us normally do, from the perspective of a distinct individual existing *within* the phenomenal universe of time and space. But, following my prayer, I entered into a 'mystical' experience. When my mind entered into that unfamiliar realm of awareness, I was suddenly seeing from the perspective of the one eternal consciousness from whom the world of time and space is projected and sustained. There was no difference between that one eternal consciousness and who I am. And there was no difference between the world and who I am. One consciousness pervaded and constituted all. It was clear to me then, and remains clear to me now, that the ability to make that shift in awareness does not lie within my control. And for that reason, I am compelled to regard its occurrence as a matter of Grace. Nonetheless, I believe that we are endowed with the ability to either cooperate with that grace or to turn our backs on it.

On the historic level, such 'mystical experience' has been occurring to individuals since the beginning. Though they are "few" in relation to the "many", nonetheless, thousands, perhaps millions, have known that eternal reality underlying the temporal one. Though it is usually a fleeting experience, it is the experiential foundation of religion, and the bedrock of idealist philosophy, lo these many centuries. The wave-theory of the scientists has been around since the late nineteenth century. Mystical experience and Wave Theory have just never been associated together before. But today marks a momentous occasion. The recognition that the mystical experience provides experiential confirmation of the scientific theory of an underlying wave-based reality signals the long-awaited and undeniable *coincidence of science and mysticism* in our time. Halleluia!

II.

Not only is wave-particle duality a recognized property of light (electromagnetic radiation), quantum theory implies that "wave-particle duality is also a property of

all matter. The electron, which we think of as a particle, is really a quantum bundle of an ‘electron-field’ which acts with wave-like properties.”⁴ However, we humans regularly perceive our macroscopic world (which is made up of the microscopic world) not as Wavular (Nondual), but as Particulate (Dualistic). Yet these two perspectives (or ‘parables’) are vastly dissimilar.

As anyone can see, neither of these two quite different ‘versions’ of the one Reality are remotely similar to the other, though they are complementary versions of the same reality. How can this be? Most of us experience the Particulate (Dualist) version of reality every day. It is our ‘normal’ view of the world. But, few of us, it seems, actually experience the “Spiritual” or Wavular (Nondual) version even for a few minutes of a lifetime. Nevertheless, it appears that these two ‘versions’ of reality are not entirely independent, though one exists in time and space, and the other in eternity. Amazingly, they exist together, overlapping, as it were, one projected upon the other.

The Wavular (Nondual) version of reality is absolute; it exists noumenally, but not phenomenally; that is, it can be seen in inner vision by the higher mind but does not appear as a physical reality. “Physical” requires time and space; and that’s where the Particle-version of reality exists. The two versions of reality exist as exclusive, yet complementary realms, or perspectives. The Wave-version of reality can be discovered as operative in the Particle-version; but the Particle-version of reality is ultimately illusory, being identical to the Vedantic concept of ‘Maya’, an appearance.

Some mystics, including myself, have experienced for themselves, in inner vision, that the true nature of Reality is wavular, and that one eternal continuum of Consciousness and Bliss is all that is. How, then, do we get from there to the ‘particulate’ reality that we all normally experience in the framework of time and space? Is it possible that this Particulate reality is a construct of the perspectives of our individual minds? What *is* this indescribable continuum of Consciousness—this wavy ocean of reality? It is the universal Mind that encompasses and includes everything, including each of ‘our’ individual minds. We are in it and part of it; we, and everything in the universe, flow along in its tides and evolve according to its whims. It is the manifest Divinity. It is God’s *lila*, His play!

But the *real* unanswerable question is ‘whence comes this Particulate world that we experience?’ If the Nondual, Wavular, vision of reality is the *correct* one, whence comes this Dualistic, Particulate, vision of reality that is ubiquitously present to each of us throughout our lives? Is it a result of human perception only?

And if it is a product of our own perception, is it ego-generated? In other words, is the Nondual ‘ocean’ of Reality overlayed by a projected ‘reality’ produced by the sense of ‘I’—which then necessitates ‘not-I’ (or ‘the other’), and hence a multitude of pairs of subjects and objects? Or is our delusion a universal one, created and impressed upon us by the divine Creator, by God?

In my own experience, these two ‘frames of reality’, the Particulate and the Wavular, the Dualist and the Nondualist, are wholly differentiated perspectives that seem to be distinctly separate realms: One, the Particulate, is our normal, personal, three-dimensional, ‘Technicolor’ world of subject-object perception and interior mind-born qualities and values. The second, the Wavular, is a non-personal, transcendent awareness from a perspective beyond time and space, which is identical with an eternal and undivided Consciousness that spreads as waves to include all existence.⁵ The Wavular, Nondual, Reality is absolute; but the Particulate, Dualistic, reality is a product of the individual mind. It is initiated, I believe, by the arising of the sense of ‘I’: that subtle ‘veil’ which we refer to as “the ego”.

Let us examine the evidence: the creation of all the pairs of opposites (dualities) occurs in the individual mind and is personally unique for each individual. Each mentally constructed value is created from the unique perspective of each ‘I’: I-other, here-there, now-then, night-day, pleasant-unpleasant, like-dislike, good-bad, beautiful-ugly, etc. One thing is essential to the creation of each of these dualities: the ego, the I. Without the ‘I’, they have no footing in this world.

But, as we all know, that ego is a *false* sense of identity. It vanishes when the real *I*, the one Consciousness, the absolute Self, is revealed. That absolute Self is *experienced* in the awareness of the Wavular (Nondual) reality when, by Divine Grace, one is lifted above the individually-created Particulate perspective to that of the Divine Mind. There, all is one Self. But how can we reach that ethereal vision? First, know that your current Dualistic perspective is false, and begin behaving in such a way to bring about the transformation of your perspective from that of your individual self to that of the One. I know well that it is not an easy task, and one that will require long effort; but we can begin simply by seeing and treating everyone equally, with love and respect.

* * *

NOTES:

1. from James Jeans, Aberdeen Address to the British Association For The Advancement of Science, 1934, “The New World-Picture of Modern Physics”. The full text of James Jeans’ 1934 Aberdeen Address may be found at: http://www-history.mcs.st-and.ac.uk/history/Extras/BA_1934_J1.html
2. *Ibid.*
3. See the description of that experience in my book, *The Supreme Self*, available on my website: www.themysticsvision.com.
4. from Frank Close (Oxford professor of Physics), *The Void*, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 107.
5. The brilliant physicist, David Bohm (1917-1992) regarded these two ‘realms’—the Wavular and the Particulate—as the “Implicate Order” and the “Explicate Order” respectively. Here is an explication of Bohm’s vision by Michael Talbot:

“Bohm ...posits that we can look at reality as if it consists of two levels. He calls the level we inhabit—where things like electrons, toaster ovens, and human beings appear to be separate from one another—the *explicate* order. The level of subatomic reality—where things cease to have separate location, quantum interconnectedness reigns, and all things become a seamless and unbroken whole—he calls the *implicate* order.

As we have seen, because everything in the universe is ultimately constituted out of things that exist at this unbroken level, the apparent separateness of objects at our own level of existence is also an illusion. ...Because we are constituted out of the nonlocal level, Bohm feels it is ultimately meaningless to speak about consciousness as having a specific location. It may manifest inside our heads while we function in life, but the true home of consciousness is in the implicate, says Bohm. Thus, consciousness, the great ocean of consciousness that has divided itself up into all human beings, also exists in all things. Despite its apparent inanimate nature, in its own way a rock is also permeated with consciousness. So are grains of sand, ocean waves, and stars.”
(from Michael Talbot, *Mysticism And The New Physics*, New York, Penguin Group, 1993; p. 158 [originally published by Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981].)

9. Non-Locality (2-25-2015)

I find it interesting that the mystical realizations occurring to me in 1966 are now showing up in Western civilization's developing scientific view of the universal reality! This developing scientific view has come about through hard-won conceptual battles between the great intellects of the twentieth century, Bohr, Einstein, Heisenberg, Born, Schrödinger, etc.; whereas my 'mystical' realizations were the result of a direct clarified perception of reality itself. In that direct clarified perception, it was perfectly clear that "all things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain." I saw, in other words, that all that is in the universe is integrally coordinated by a single will, so that 'all things move together of one accord'. This view of physical reality, translated into the terminology acceptable to the scientific community, states that there are no independent causes or effects occurring solely in a local setting, but everything is interconnected, coordinated universally—that is to say, non-locally. Here is a particularly well-expressed version of that understanding presented by David Bohm and his co-author, Basil Hiley, in a 1975 article:

The world which we perceive cannot properly be analyzed into independently existent parts with fixed and determinate dynamical relationships between each of the parts. Rather, the 'parts' are seen to be in immediate connection, in which their dynamical relationships depend, in an irreducible way, on the state of the whole system (and indeed on that of broader systems in which they are contained, extending ultimately and in principle to the entire universe). Thus, one is led to a new notion of unbroken wholeness which denies the classical idea of analyzability of the world into separately and independently existent parts. We have reversed the usual classical notion that the independent 'elementary parts' of the world are the fundamental reality, and that the various systems are merely particular contingent forms and arrangements of these parts. Rather, we say that inseparable quantum inter-connectedness of the whole universe is the fundamental reality, and that relatively independently behaving parts are merely particular and contingent forms within this whole.¹

...Ultimately, the entire universe (with all its particles, including those constituting human beings, their laboratories, observing instruments, etc.) has to be understood as a single undivided Whole, in which

analysis into separately and independently existent parts has no fundamental status. ²

While the question of non-locality originally arose from the thought-experiment outlined in the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen (EPR) paper which Einstein submitted to Neils Bohr in 1935 in the attempt to prove Quantum Theory incomplete, and “spooky action at a distance” non-existent, the technological means to actually perform the empirical tests needed to determine the scientific basis for non-locality, proving Bohr correct and Einstein incorrect, did not present themselves until long after Einstein had passed away. In 1964, the theoretical physicist, John Bell, along with experimenters Alain Aspect, in 1982, and Nicolas Gisin, in 1997, conclusively proved by empirical methods that “non-locality” is a scientific fact, and this fact has been universally accepted by the community of physicists throughout the world. Nonetheless, there remains a wide gulf between the direct ‘mystical’ knowledge of reality and a conceptual scientific knowledge based on empirical proofs. The mystical experience is a direct revelation of the living Self who is the source and director of the universal array. It is not a linguistically framed theory of universal mechanics, but rather a living confirmation of the one divine Mind who both contains and *is* everything that exists, including oneself. No amount of familiarity with or proficiency in the understanding of the theorems of quantum physics is capable of producing that direct knowledge.

The scientific principle of *Non-locality* simply expresses in an oddly roundabout way the fact that has been known for millennia by the faithful of all religions that we exist within a ‘reality’ imaged forth by the one Divine Mind, and in which everything that occurs is His doing and occurs within Him according to His omnipotent Providence. Of course, there are no local causes or effects; Causation begins with Him and extends in an infinite network of effects throughout the universe to bring His purposes to fruition. We are simply His eyes and ears, His instruments of knowing and exultation, His singers and worshippers, His imagined others. We too are non-local, rooted in the infinite and eternal Cause, and extending throughout the expansive universe as wave-particles of the one living Being. Halleluia!

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NOTES:

1. Bohm, David and Hiley, Basil, "On The Intuitive Understanding of Non-Locality as Implied By Quantum Theory", London, Foundations of Physics journal, Vol. V, 1975; pp. 96, 102.
2. Bohm, David, *Wholeness And Implicate Order*, London, Routledge, 1980.

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10. Complementary Perspectives (2013; revised 5-24-2014, 3-25-2016.)

I. The Coincidence of Science And Mysticism

In the field of physics, the dispute over whether light was particulate or wavular continued to play out over several centuries. Newton asserted that light was particulate; Faraday and Maxwell showed that it was wavular. Plank and Einstein showed that it was particulate; DeBroglie and Schrödinger showed that both light and matter (electrons) were wavular. Eventually, Neils Bohr attempted to settle the matter by declaring that light and matter appear to be either wavular or particulate, depending on how you measure them; and he declared them to be “complementary” perspectives, each contributing to the total information about light and matter.¹ This became known as the ‘Copenhagen interpretation’ since that’s where Bohr’s institute was located; and this notion of ‘complementarity’ was eventually adopted by the majority in the physics community.

As a result, today we have become somewhat accustomed to the picture of the world presented to us by modern physics which asks us to accept that the world consists of either particles or of waves—depending on how we decide to analyze it. Suffice it to say that, in some experiments both light and matter prove to be particulate; and in some experiments both light and matter prove to be wavular. This empirical ambiguity is so prevalent in the field of physics that we now refer to the constituents of both light and matter as “wave-particles” or “wavicles”; and the phrase “wave-particle duality”, despite the clearly contradictory nature of the term, is commonly heard, though few seem to understand what it means.

Reality, as we all know, is one; and yet it can appear to be divisible into individually distinct and separate perceivable entities or appear as waves on a single continuum in the experience of which there is no distinction between subject and object. Back in the 1930’s, many were pondering these two ‘versions’ of reality which physics had discovered were complementary but irreconcilable descriptions of the reality we experience—among them the highly respected mathematician and dabbler in physics, James Jeans (1877-1946). Jeans attempted to explain in a picturesque way why these two complementary versions of reality were required:

“When geography cannot combine all the qualities we want in a single map, it provides us with more than one map. Theoretical physics has done the same, providing us with two maps which are commonly

known as the particle-picture and the wave-picture. It is perhaps better to speak of these two pictures as the particle-parable and the wave-parable.

“The particle-parable, which was first in the field, told us that the material universe consists of particles existing in space and time.

“...The wave-parable ... does not describe the universe as a collection of particles but as a system of waves. ... [In this parable,] the universe is no longer a deluge of shot from a battery of machine-guns, but a stormy sea with the sea taken away and only the abstract quality of storminess left...”²

“The old particle-picture which lay within the limits of space and time, broke matter up into a crowd of distinct particles, and radiation into a shower of distinct photons. The newer and more accurate wave-picture, which transcends the framework of space and time, recombines the photons into a single beam of light, and the shower of parallel-moving electrons into a continuous electric current. Atomicity and division into individual existences are fundamental in the restricted space-time picture, but disappear in the wider, and as far as we know more truthful, picture which transcends space and time. In this, atomicity is replaced by ... ‘holism’: the photons are no longer distinct individuals each going its own way, but members of a single organization or whole— a beam of light.

“...And is it not conceivable that what is true of the objects perceived may be true also of the perceiving minds? When we view ourselves in space and time we are quite obviously distinct individuals; when we pass beyond space and time we may perhaps form ingredients of a continuous stream of life.”³

It suddenly struck me, in reading this description of the Wavular version of reality, that this is a description of ‘the mystical experience’ that occurred to me in my cabin in the woods in 1966.⁴ At that time, I had experienced a shift in consciousness from what I regarded as the ‘normal’ version of reality consisting of numerous distinct objects into another, unfamiliar, version of reality in which subject and object are one. But what does that even mean? What is ‘another version of reality’? Is there more than one reality? You see, there has been no vocabulary other than that of spirituality with which to describe the Nondual reality in which one finds oneself in this so-called ‘mystical’ experience—until

now. Perhaps we must look to the vocabulary of the physicists to comprehend and explain it!

In order to understand these two complementary ways of viewing the universe from the perspective of the scientists, let's look at the characteristics, the qualities, of these two 'versions' of reality and see in what ways they differ. First, the Particulate, or 'corpuscular' version:

The Particulate (Dualist) Version of Reality

1. Here, each perceiving subject and each perceived object possesses a unique identity, each individual subject or object being distinct from any other.
 2. Here, every perceiving subject and perceived object consists of smaller units, referred to, in sequence, as molecules, atoms, and sub-atomic particles.
 3. Here, the consciousness of each subject perceives, in addition to the subject-object duality, a self-created duality of values, emotions, qualities, consisting of pairs, such as like-dislike, happy-sad, pleased-displeased, etc.
 4. Here, both subjective and objective events occur within the parameters of time and space. Within these parameters, each perceiving subject (soul?) is born, matures, and eventually dies (perhaps to reincarnate at a later time).
 5. Here, the struggle for individual existence sets creature against creature according to the diversity of self-interest and motive.
-

That is the Particle Version of Reality. And now, the 'version' of reality into which I shifted during my 'mystical' experience:

The Wavular (Nondual) Version of Reality

1. Here, only one limitless continuum of Consciousness exists, containing within It all phenomena, including one's own body, consisting of waves in the continuum.
2. Here, all wavular phenomena consist of and are manifestations of the one continuum, having no distinct identity of their own.
3. Here, consciousness experiences itself as the one continuum. There is only the One, with no division anywhere.

4. Here, what is experienced is one's eternal Self. Time and space do not exist. All that occurs is the correlation and natural evolution of the waves of the one integrated continuum.
 5. Here, all the wavular phenomena move together of one accord, one harmony, one purpose.
-

In 1966, when I was sitting in my cabin before the fire in the stove, I was experiencing 'reality', as all of us normally do, from the perspective of a distinct individual existing *within* the phenomenal universe of time and space. But, following my prayer, I entered into this 'mystical' experience. When my mind entered into that unfamiliar realm of awareness, I was suddenly seeing from the perspective of the one eternal consciousness from whom the world of time and space is projected and sustained. There was no difference between that one eternal consciousness and I. And there was no difference between the world and I. One consciousness pervaded and constituted all. It was clear to me then, and remains clear to me now, that the ability to make that shift in awareness does not lie within my control. And for that reason, I am compelled to regard its occurrence as a matter of Grace. Nonetheless, I believe that we are endowed with the ability to either cooperate with that grace or to turn our backs on it.

On the historic level, such 'mystical experience' has been occurring to individuals since the beginning. Though they are "few" in relation to the "many", nonetheless, thousands, perhaps millions, have known that eternal reality underlying the temporal one. Though it is usually a fleeting experience, it is the experiential foundation of religion, and the bedrock of idealist philosophy, for these many centuries. It was no doubt that very experience occurring to Jesus twenty centuries ago that led him to declare, "I and the Father are one." The wave-theory of the scientists has only been around since the late nineteenth century. Mystical experience and Wave Theory have just never been associated together before. But today marks a momentous occasion. The recognition that the mystical experience provides experiential confirmation of the scientific theory of an underlying wave-based reality signals the long-awaited and undeniable *coincidence of science and mysticism* in our time. Halleluia!

II. Are There Two Versions of Reality?

Not only is wave-particle duality a recognized property of light (electromagnetic radiation), quantum theory implies that "Wave-particle duality is a property of all matter as well. The electron, which we think of as a particle, is really a quantum

bundle of an ‘electron-field’ which acts with wave-like properties.”¹ However, we humans regularly perceive our macroscopic world (which is made up of the microscopic world) not as a Wavular (Nondual) *Field*, but as multiple Particulate (Dualistic) entities. Yet these two perspectives (or ‘parables’) are vastly dissimilar, one having its basis in an eternal sub-reality, and the other occurring as its gross manifestation in a spatio-temporal version of reality that only came into being fourteen billion years ago with ‘the Great Radiance’.

As anyone can see, neither of these two quite different ‘versions’ of the one reality are remotely similar to the other, though they are complementary versions of the same reality. How can this be? Most of us experience the Particulate (Dualist) version of reality every day. It is our ‘normal’ view of the world. But, few of us, it seems, actually experience the “Spiritual” or Wavular (Nondual) version even for a few minutes of a lifetime. Nevertheless, it appears that these two ‘versions’ of reality are not entirely independent, though one exists in time and space, and the other in eternity. Amazingly, they exist together, overlapping, as it were, one projected *upon* the other, and *from* the other.

The Wavular (Nondual) version of reality is absolute. It exists noumenally, but not phenomenally; that is, it can be seen in inner vision by the higher mind but does not appear as a physical reality. “Physical” requires time and space; and that’s where the Particle-version of reality exists. The two versions of reality exist as exclusive, yet complementary realms, or perspectives. The Wave-version of reality can be discovered as operative in the Particle-version; but the Particle-version of reality is ultimately illusory, being identical to the Vedantic concept of ‘Maya’, an appearance.

Some mystics, including myself, have experienced for themselves, in inner vision, that the nature of reality is a wavular continuum, and that this one eternal continuum of Consciousness and Bliss is all that is. This is clearly experienced at a ‘higher’, or subtler, level of consciousness, but having experienced it, how and why do we then sink from there to the ‘particulate’ reality that we all normally experience in the framework of time and space? Is it possible that this particulate reality is a construct of the perspectives of our individual minds?

What *is* this indescribable ‘quantum field’, this undivided continuum of Consciousness— this wavy ocean of reality? Is It the universal Mind that encompasses and includes everything, including each of ‘our’ individual minds? We are in it and part of it; we and everything in the universe flow along in its tides and evolve according to its whims. It is the manifest Divinity. Some say it is God’s *lila*, His play!

But the *real* unanswerable question is ‘whence comes this Particulate world that we experience?’ If the Nondual, Wavular, vision of reality is the ultimately *real* one, whence comes this Dualistic, Particulate, vision of reality that is ubiquitously present to each of us throughout our lives? Is it a result of human perception only? And if it is a product of our own perception, is it ego-generated? In other words, is the Nondual ‘ocean’ of reality overlaid by a projected ‘reality’ produced by the sense of ‘I’—which then necessitates ‘not-I’ (or ‘the other’), and hence a multitude of pairs of opposites? Or is our delusion a universal one, created and ordained by God?

In my own experience, these two ‘frames of reality’, the Particulate and the Wavular, the Dualist and the Nondualist, are wholly differentiated perspectives that almost seem to be distinctly separate dimensional realms: One, the Particulate, is our normal, personal, ‘Technicolor’, world of subject-object perception and interior mind-born qualities and values. The second, the Wavular, is a non-personal, transcendent awareness from a perspective beyond time and space, which is identical with an eternal and undivided Consciousness that spreads as waves to include all existence.² The Wavular, Nondual, reality is absolute; but the Particulate, Dualist, reality is a product of the individual mind. It is initiated, I believe, by the arising of the sense of ‘I’—that which we refer to as “the ego”.

Let us examine the evidence: the creation of all the pairs of opposites (dualities) occurs in the individual mind and is personally unique for each individual. Each mentally constructed value is created from the unique perspective of each ‘I’: I-other, here-there, now-then, night-day, pleasant-unpleasant, like-dislike, good-bad, beautiful-ugly, etc. One thing is essential to the creation of each of these dualities: the ego, the I. Without the ‘I’, they have no footing in this world.

But, as we all know, that ego is a *false* sense of identity. It vanishes when the real *I*, the one Consciousness, the absolute Self, is revealed. That absolute Self is *experienced* as the eternal awareness of the Wavular (Nondual) reality when, by divine grace, one is lifted above the individually-created Particulate perspective to that of the divine Mind. There, all is one Self. But how can we reach that ethereal vision? First, know that your current Dualist perspective is false, and begin behaving in such a way to bring about the transformation of your perspective from that of a personal individual self to that of the One. I know well that it is not an easy task, and one that will require long effort; but you can begin simply by treating everyone with love.

III. David Bohm's Implicate Order

According to the mystics who have seen into the nature of reality at the noumenal level, God, the one absolute Consciousness, is the Source and Cause of all phenomena, manifesting the universe by His Creative Power in a manner similar to the projection of thought in the mind of an individual. This Divine Thought contains implicit within it the conscious Intelligence of the Source; and implicit in it also is the entire design and evolution of the universe, from its initial coming into being to all the refinements and transformations necessary in the process of its ultimate realization. Science does not recognize such a scenario as tenable, and relegates the visionary knowledge of the mystics to the category of speculative metaphysics. However, one brave scientist stepped forward to acknowledge the possibility that the mystic's vision could provide a basis for a true and consistent worldview; his name is David Bohm.

David Bohm (1917-1992) was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania on December 20, 1917. His father was a Jewish furniture dealer, but David went to college, receiving his B.Sc. degree from Pennsylvania State College in 1939 and his Ph.D. in physics at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1943. At U.C. Berkeley, he studied with Robert Oppenheimer; and when Oppenheimer went to Los Alamos to work on the "Manhattan Project", Bohm remained as research physicist at Berkeley, working on the Theory of Plasma and on the Theory of Synchrotron and Syndrocyclotrons until 1947, when he took a position as an Assistant Professor at Princeton University, working on Plasmas, Theory of Metals, Quantum Mechanics and Elementary Particles. It was there he met and had regular meetings with Albert Einstein.

In 1949, during the repressive McCarthy era, Bohm was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee, and he was asked to testify against Robert Oppenheimer who was being accused of Communist sympathies. Bohm refused to testify, and he was thereafter tried and acquitted. But the damage had been done; he was fired from his position at Princeton University, and was unable to find work in this country. He then moved to Brazil where he taught briefly at the University of Sao Paulo. He also taught for a brief time in Israel before moving to Bristol, England in 1957. In 1961, he became professor of physics at Birkbeck College of the University of London, and remained there for the next 30 years, writing and publishing his several books: *Causality and Chance in Modern Physics* (1957), *The Special Theory of Relativity* (1966), *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (1980), and *Science, Order and Creativity* (1987). David Bohm died in 1992.

In the 1950's David Bohm was widely considered one of the most talented and promising physicists of his generation. Albert Einstein regarded him as his successor. But his primary work from the 1950's to the 1990's—the ongoing development of his “causal interpretation” (which he later referred to as an “ontological interpretation”) of quantum mechanics as an alternative to the standard ‘Copenhagen Interpretation’—was met with dismissive hostility by the majority of the world physics community. In an attempt to provide a scientific formulation of quantum physics consistent with the mystic's vision of a Divine origin and manifestation of our world, Bohm developed and presented his ontological theory, postulating the “unfoldment” of the order of the phenomenal world from an “enfolded” order at a subtler invisible level, referring to these two as “the explicate order” and “the implicate order”. These two ‘orders’, one invisible and timeless (the implicate order), the other phenomenal and temporal (the explicate order), comprise what Bohm calls ‘the holomovement’, “the unbroken wholeness of the totality of existence as an undivided flowing movement without borders”.¹

According to his theory, the implicate order is an invisible substratum containing an archetypal template for the emergence and dynamics of both matter and consciousness, much the way the human mind is the archetypal template of conscious thoughts produced from it. And in his wonderfully lucid writings he endeavored to explain how an “explicate order” such as this perceived universe is has its source in and unfolds from an implicate, or enfolded order. The implicate order implicitly contains and manifests the explicate order, and the explicate order contains within itself the implicate order.

Bohm theorizes that, in the implicate order, all things are interconnected in a way that transcends space and time. This is because the implicate order is an integral noumenal substratum resembling a transcendent Thought-matrix which generates, forms, and organizes the constituents of the explicate order. Everything in the implicate order consists of one wavular continuum (as does thought) until it is manifest in the explicate (spatio-temporal) order; i.e., is witnessed by a conscious observer. Then it becomes particulate; i.e., ‘an individualized ‘thing’. Bohm suggests that this wave/particle complementarity can be explained by the implicate-explicate order duality. In the implicate order, objects consist of waves in a continuum (a *Field*); in the explicate order, those objects appear to be particulate.

Bohm eventually felt it necessary to amend his theory to acknowledge a yet subtler Source underlying the implicate order as its Fount, a superimplicate order (or even a subtler super-superimplicate order, both of which were only vaguely

defined), which could be interpreted as an eternal multidimensional Ground resembling the Absolute Consciousness, or “the One”, of Neoplatonism, or the absolute Brahman of the Upanishads. Thus, not only is the emergence of time and space, matter and energy, given a causal base in this superimplicate order, so is the subjective consciousness of man. This view, while it replicates the metaphysics of the mystic, and has the advantage of being a consistent and plausible model, also has the disadvantage, from the standpoint of science, of being wholly undemonstrable, as is any metaphysics that postulates a transcendent and noumenal source for the physical universe. But Bohm was more interested in a correspondence with truth than with a correspondence with scientific criteria.

Bohm presented his ‘ontological’ theory, not as empirical evidence or ‘scientific’ proof, but as a plausible framework to answer many of the questions that were and remain to this day so baffling to science—such as the source of the wave-particle duality, the Mind-Matter duality, the apparent purposive activity of natural elements, the so-called ‘entanglement’ of individual particles, and many other unexplained phenomena. His multi-dimensional framework is consistent with the ‘mystical’ visions reported repeatedly by mystics and seers of every spiritual tradition throughout history. And, though there is no mention of a personal ‘mystical’ experience in any of his writings, one suspects that Bohm did indeed experience a revelation of sorts in his early life that led him to devote his future life and career to the framing of a metaphysics inspired by that vision and applicable to many of the recent observations in quantum physics, his chosen field.

In his original theory, Bohm postulated the existence of a “quantum potential”, which he saw as a wave-like complement to each individual quantum (particle) that provided the information to guide and control the movement and function of each particle. In his later writings, he amended this concept to a “quantum *field* potential” assigning the guidance-wave—not merely to the individual quantum particle, but to the entire energy field from which the particle arose, and by extension to the entire universe. This brings Bohm’s theory more in line with traditional mystical theology which suggests a single divine Mind as the one guiding and controlling force operative throughout the universe.

We may readily recognize that the concept of the “implicate order” is quite similar to what the mystic describes as ‘the divine Mind’ (*Nous*), or ‘the creative Energy of God’, out of which all phenomena arise, and in which all are contained. While remaining ever-free and clear, the divine Mind extends Him/Itself by way of this Energy to the entire universe. The divine Mind is inherent and implicit in His Energy, and so He fills all animate and inanimate beings, to varying degrees according to their evolution, with His own Consciousness and Joy, and moves

them all according to His will. Thus, the manifested living beings, who are the evolutes of His Energy, are able to know within themselves His being, His freedom, His Consciousness, His Joy. By His grace, they are able to transcend in mind the limitations of the egocentricity imposed on them in the process of manifestation and are able to ascend in consciousness to the very being of God, knowing Him as their original and authentic Self.

In that ascension, they perceive the perfection of His universal manifestation in which all created things are linked in a wonderful unity of being and becoming. Like the atoms in a cresting wave, or in the flowering of a rose, they are welded together in a synchronous dance of movement toward their intended evolutionary culmination. How vast and perfect in every way is their dance! It is indescribably wonderful! In the mystic's vision the unfolding of the universe and all that that entails is seen to be a coordinated and integrated presentation wherein "all things move together of one accord;" and "assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain." This vision is to be found also in David Bohm's expression of the implicate-explicate order of the universe. He sees the "superimplicate order" as the ultimate conscious Source of the implicate order, and the implicate order as the causal framework of the explicate order—the explicate order (the manifest universe) being merely a limited "reflection" of the implicate order. In the mystic's vision, as in Bohm's theoretical postulations, the question of causality, dispensed with in the 'Copenhagen Interpretation' of quantum physics, reappears as an inherent principle in the design of the Whole.

In Bohm's broad suppositional proposition, causality is seen to rest in the implicate order (and ultimately in the superimplicate order), whose phenomenal effect is the explicate order in all its manifestory effusiveness. And, while this 'ontological interpretation' of David Bohm's is a marvelous restatement of and extrapolation on the expressed vision of the mystic, it remains, from the standpoint of science, merely another speculative philosophy, unprovable and unfalsifiable by science's criteria of proof.

But consider: On the evening of November 18, 1966, I was privileged to "tap in" to what I now consider to be the subtle-level aspect of reality that Dr. David Bohm labeled "the implicate order". Dr. Bohm founded his conception of 'the implicate order' on purely theoretical grounds, never suggesting that this hidden 'order' could be known intelligibly; but the fact remains that the visual experience described by myself and other mystics is identical with what Dr. Bohm describes as the characteristic features of 'the implicate order'. Surely, this would tend to

lend credence to the reality of what is experienced in ‘the mystical vision’ as well as to offer confirmation of the theories of David Bohm.

Though this non-spatio-temporal aspect of reality he refers to as ‘the implicate order’ has been called in the past by many different names, no one prior to Dr. Bohm has so clearly connected its existence to current scientific evidence and the requirements of a logically consistent scientific framework. Clearly, Bohm’s work is ground-breaking proof that gnosis is a fruitful source for scientific investigation and understanding. In effect, Bohm has translated the great theology of mystics like Plotinus and Shankara into the vocabulary of physics and given it a form and rationale that is relevant today. Perhaps other scientists will follow the path he has shown, expanding on his vision, and bringing us closer to a science that corresponds with the declarations of revelation proffered by the Gnostics.

Here is a graphic to show how each of the prominent mystical traditions relate to Bohm’s ‘causal’ scheme:

| <i>Plotinus</i> | <i>Vedanta</i> | <i>David Bohm</i> |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| The One | Brahman | The Superimplicate Order |
| The Divine Mind | Ishvara/Maya | The Implicate Order |
| Soul/World | Jiva/Jagat | The Explicate Order |

Bohm’s vision is, in its essence, compatible with, and virtually identical to, the perennial vision of the mystics. It is flexible enough to encompass consciousness, creativity, and all the phenomena experienced in the subjective and objective world of experience. It also provides the answers to nearly all of the questions put forth by quantum physics in recent times; in fact, it was designed by Bohm to answer these questions. For example, the question regarding the wave-particle duality and the phenomena of non-local effects. “Non-locality” refers to the fact that particles from a larger particle that are split off from one another are able to affect one another immediately even at great distances—hence non-locally, as well as acausally. Since there is no actual causal relationship between such distant particles, these non-local interactions are considered to be *entangled* or synchronous, representing instantaneously connected ripples in a vast conscious ocean of energy.

Thus, in Bohm's scheme, as in those of the mystics, all things, as projections of a higher dimensional reality, are immediately linked in a web of relationship which is not determined by proximity, or interacting forces, but simply by participation in that common conscious Whole. That distinct entities need not share the same local region of space to be immediately interconnected is therefore explained by Bohm's theory. As Bohm has stated:

Ultimately, the entire universe (with all its particles, including those constituting human beings, their laboratories, observing instruments, etc.) has to be understood as a single undivided Whole, in which analysis into separately and independently existent parts has no fundamental status. ²

This explanation of the nonlocal (acausal) interconnectedness of particles that are constituents within a whole, as well as an unbroken continuum of Consciousness, suggests an explanation for clairvoyance, telepathy, and the oft-experienced phenomenon of synchronicity in human events, first given attention by Carl Jung. 'Synchronicity' refers to the occurrence of unexplainable and causally unconnected, yet meaningful, "coincidences" such as the type all of us have at times experienced. It may involve thinking of someone who then immediately calls on the phone. Or it may involve the uncanny repetition of a theme or motif in our daily life, such as an image, name or number repeatedly appearing in various circumstances. Or it might be evidenced in the actuality of some occurring event that you had dreamed of the night before. Such "coincidences" are explained similarly in terms of the quantum interconnectedness of all things in both the implicate and the explicate orders.

On the cosmic and the human scale, "synchronicity" refers to the universal propensity of matter and consciousness to follow a specific governing energy pattern: what Jung called an "archetype". *Archetype* is the name given to specifically defined "energies" which exist as invisible real-world "forces" that manifest in both the material and the mental realm. For example, the Sun, Moon, and the planets all have "archetypal" energies associated with them. These energies were described and elaborated into metaphorical personalities by earlier civilizations, namely the Babylonians and the Greeks, who regarded them as "gods", embodied as the planets. Thus, each of the bodies within the solar system, including the Sun and Moon, individually embody an archetypal energy which is said to define its particular "influence". These archetypal influences continue to exist today, even though we no longer think of them as "gods".

Many events which we would normally think of as synchronistic, or coincidental, occur in a common astronomical milieu; i.e., under common planetary conditions, as, for example, a retrograde station of Mercury, a Moon-Neptune square aspect, or any other similar configuration occurring in the heavens. A violent dream might occur at the exact time of a Mars transit to the position of a planet in our own personal natal planetary map. This would constitute a synchronistic relationship between the Mars' transit and our own psyche. However, most of us are unaware of the continuously changing angular interrelationships between planets or of their relationship to our own natal maps. And while many hold that such interplanetary relationships are not the *causes* of earth-events or psychological states, they are synchronous with them, and serve to signal the presence of archetypal energies operating in the external universe for those who are prepared to read these signs.³

How, one wonders, do the planetary positions and angular relationships relate to human subjects? And most especially, how do the current positions of planets and their angular relationships relate to the positions of the planets at the time of the birth of the individual? Most scientists would answer, 'They don't! Such a notion is simply a relic of ancient superstition!' But the reality of the synchronicity of planetary positions and their archetypal energies with actual events or states of consciousness is unquestionable to one who has made a long and careful study of the planetary motions and their synchronous correlations. And yet the question of *how* these distant planets can affect a significant change in one's world and in the subjective content of one's mind is still an open question, and a matter of yet unresolved controversy. Is the connection local or non-local? Is it causal or acausal?

The theory of a local connection, adhered to by some, derives from the classical mechanistic view of the universe, and suggests some kind of wave pattern interference or facilitation. If there is an electromagnetic-type of wave field that extends from all the planets to earth and also interacts with human brain waves, then the connection is local, and the phenomena of astrological correspondences is explained as a *causal* relationship. To date, however, no such field has been discovered. The alternative theory is that mind and planets are instantaneously interconnected *non-locally* as embodiments of one all-pervasive Intelligence. Such correlations exist not in any cause-effect manner, but rather in the same way as the other acausal connections we have discussed; they exist because of the interconnectedness of all things within the universe at the "implicate" level. Clearly, synchronicity, the synchronization of events, takes place only within a coordinated whole. In such a coordinated whole, we would never be able to know

or prove *how* such correlations work; we could only say, “Thy will be done.” According to this theory, the universe is not a great clock; it is one conscious and coordinated Whole established in the one great Mind.

According to this theory, it is a consciously projected and integrated Thought-construct in which we live; a dream-world. The planets and their synchronicity with mental and physical actions are, like us, constituents in an integral Thought-drama. Who can measure the relationships between items in a dream? They are not separate; they are constituents of a Whole, in which there are no divisions. It’s all God – His Thought-projection. He is both the Cause and the effect. Within this Thought-drama, planets move, people evolve; it’s all organically coordinated, but there are no independent causal relationships going on within it. It is the way it is because that is just the way He thought it, willed it. In other words, the planets are to be seen as signs, or markers, of particular archetypal energies contained within the whole, signifying elements of the cosmic design fashioned by a transcendent Intelligence. In such a universe, what clearer understanding could one gain by pursuing the matter further? Additional scientific enquiry would be irrelevant. Communing with the Author through love would be far more fruitful.

IV. The Synchronicity of Cosmos And Psyche

The dawning recognition by many scientists of the quantum interconnectedness of everything in the cosmos is one of the most significant recent developments within the scientific community. And one of the most potent sources of evidence for this view has recently been produced by Richard Tarnas, a cultural historian and professor of philosophy, whose book, *Cosmos And Psyche*, gives lucid and dramatic expression to one particular facet of this wholistic view. In his book, he relates the results of the thirty-years of research he accumulated on the relationships between the ordered movements of the planets and the historical events and psychological states observed in our Western culture over the last two millennia. From this study, he concludes:

I have become convinced, after the most painstaking investigation and critical assessment of which I am capable, that there does in fact exist a highly significant—indeed a pervasive—correspondence between planetary movements and human affairs, and that the modern assumption to the contrary has been erroneous. The evidence suggests not that the planets themselves cause various events or character traits, but rather that a consistently meaningful empirical correspondence exists between the two sets of phenomena, astronomical and human,

with the connecting principle most fruitfully approached as some form of archetypally informed synchronicity.¹

Drawing upon an enormous amount of research, which is divulged in the course of his book, Tarnas builds an impressively unassailable case for the above conclusion. He has shown by scientific methods that there is, indeed, a proven correlation between the recognized archetypal energies associated with the various planets and the manifestation of those energies in the lives and activities of humans on earth. I had attempted to show, in my book, *The Supreme Self*, that even the mystical experience, what has been referred to as ‘the union of soul and God’, is seen to be signaled by particular planetary patterns, especially as those transiting patterns relate to the positions of the planets at the time of the individual’s birth; and Tarnas’ work now confirms and corroborates those findings.

What an extraordinarily remarkable and amazing discovery this is: that our lives, our births, our very thoughts, are intertwined with the planetary energies and their angular relationships to one another! I too have watched and wondered at the amazing synchronicity evidenced between the planets and my own inner and outer world for over thirty years, and I doubted that I would ever see a comprehensive presentation of empirical evidence for these synchronicities in my lifetime. But Richard Tarnas has accomplished the impossible. For that, he will take his place among the giants. In this recently published book, Richard Tarnas, one of the finest, most well-informed, minds of our time or any other, has shown in an overwhelming fashion the synchronous correlations between various planetary patterns occurring throughout history and the events and cultural motifs that have surfaced historically in human affairs. It seems almost certain to me that this book will be regarded in the future as a significant watershed in the intellectual and spiritual development of our Western culture. Whether the minds of average citizens are capable of the mental subtlety required for grasping and utilizing this knowledge in their lives remains yet to be seen.

Tarnas’ monumental study does not omit the recognition of a noumenal Cause behind the many interconnections in the universe; in fact, he acknowledges the limitations of a purely “scientific” engagement with the cosmos, and advocates a larger engagement that integrates science with spiritual vision:

.. This larger engagement with the cosmos will require of us a profound shift in what we regard as legitimate knowledge. It will demand an initial act of trust in the possible reality of an ensouled cosmos of transformative beauty and purposeful intelligence.²

... The cosmos as a living whole appears to be informed by some kind of pervasive creative intelligence—an intelligence, judging by the data, of scarcely conceivable power, complexity, and aesthetic subtlety, yet one with which human intelligence is intimately connected, and in which it can consciously participate.³

Though Tarnas is clearly an exception, there is a tendency among many of the purveyors of the newly formulated synchronistic worldview to omit or entirely dismiss the concept of an ultimate intelligent Cause, immanent within Its own creation. Acausal connections within the Whole do not eliminate the requirement of a Cause for the Whole itself. We must not simply take the ‘implicate order’ to be an independent *a priori* substratum.

There is a supreme ruler from whom the implicate order derives, who generated the universe and set it in motion, who is its efficient and its material Cause as well as its underlying order, and who permeates every particle of the Whole. He is not merely the implicate order; He is the Cause of all that exists, and is the center of our intelligence, our creativity, our soul; He is our true and lasting Self. He cannot be seen or measured in any way; and so, He is beyond the methods of science. He can be known only through His gracious Self-revelation—in other words, through gnosis. He is the One to whom we must look, and the One to whom we offer reverence and gratitude for all that we are and all that we enjoy. Yes, Virginia, there is a God; He does exist. He really exists! And yes, He is loving; He is full of kindness and joy, and He knows everything. I know; I have seen Him.

V. Summarizing Complementary Perspectives

For David Bohm, the wave-particle duality was indicative of the perspective from two different planes or levels of reality, one invisible and beyond time and space, consisting of a field of spreading waves, and a second plane or level of reality manifesting in the physical time-and-space world consisting of particulate matter. The first, the subtle-level plane, he called “the implicate order”; and the second, the physical plane, arising from the former, he called “the explicate order”. He explained the wave-particle duality in terms of these two “orders”, both of which, he believed, contribute to our experience of the world that we perceive and with which we interact.

As Bohm points out, from the eternal perspective of *the implicate order*, one contiguous field, or continuum, spreads its ripples, and everything consists of those ripples or waves—there are no distinct individual entities; all are interconnected in one, and consist of that one, as waves spreading on the ocean consist of the ocean.

But from the perspective of the (spatio-temporally manifest) *explicate order*, things are individualized, particularized; as each wave on the ocean has its own individual characteristics, each thing or being in the explicate order has its own separate identity or soul. So, in a way similar to, and directly related to, the wave-particle duality, there is also a duality of self-identification. Just as, from different perspectives we may appear wavular or particulate, similarly, from different perspectives we may appear to be identical to the universal Consciousness or distinct as an individual soul.

Another dispute similar to the wave-particle debate had been going on for centuries in the realm of metaphysics: it was between the advocates of causal determinism and the advocates of free will or choice. The question is “Are we entirely governed by the will of the One, or do we have a free and independent will to do as we choose? Do we move in accordance with the will of one all-inclusive causal tide, or do we each have the ability to determine our own fate according to our individual choices?” Through the centuries, this dispute went back and forth in a manner reminiscent of the wave-particle dispute, with no resolution. And no one seemed to notice that this dispute was directly linked to the wave-particle dispute! Just as light and electrons, viewed from different perspectives, appear to be either wavular or particulate, our identities, viewed from different perspectives, may appear to be either contained in and identical with the universal Consciousness or as distinct individual souls. The perspective from the vantage point of eternity is quite different than the perspective from the vantage point of time and space! Likewise, viewed from these different perspectives, we may appear to be either totally determined by universal causal factors or entirely free to choose our own actions.

The notion that we, and everything in the universe, may appear as wavular from one perspective, and particulate from another has not yet sunk into the collective psyche; no doubt, it will also be difficult for humanity to come to terms with the understanding that, from one perspective, we are entirely at the mercy of the universal causal fiat, and from another perspective, we are entirely self-determined and solely responsible for our actions— in other words, that we are *both* the manifestations of the one nondual continuum and an individual soul, that we are *both* determined and free!

Mystical experience such as that of my own and others, along with the experimental findings of respected physicists, leads us to acknowledge that the wave-particle duality is not just a curious paradox; it represents a new paradigm whose implications have not yet fully dawned on the scientists—let alone on the

public. The fact that light and matter reveal themselves to be particulate in some experiments and wavular in others suggests to some (like David Bohm) that there are two separate perspectives overlapping—a wavular one and a particulate one (even if the particulate perspective turns out to be merely a subjectively induced illusion).

So far, humanity has not been able to come to terms with the question of whether we are determined or free in our willing; but perhaps we will also eventually come to an understanding that the determinism-freedom duality, like the wave-particle duality, is a complementarity of perspectives that we can accept, recognizing that we may appear to be causally determined *and/or* appear to possess a free will, depending on our perspective. Such an understanding, however challenging to our current world-view and to everyone's sanity, would certainly serve to clarify and resolve one more long-standing dispute over the question of whether we are free or determined in our will.

We may also eventually see that this complementarity of determinism and freedom is closely bound up with the complementarity of identities—the recognition that from an eternal perspective we may appear to be participants in the continuum of the one world-soul (*Atman/Brahman*), and therefore identical with It; and we may also appear from the spatio-temporal perspective to be distinct individualized souls (*jivas*). Both of these perspectives contribute information necessary to the complete knowledge of ourselves and are therefore complementary. The relationship between the underlying unity of Consciousness (the implicate order, or wavular continuum) and the manifold universe of individual subjective souls and objects (the explicate order, or particulate phenomena) is comparable to the relationship between the ocean and its waves. What we mean by 'the ocean' is the self-contained body of water; 'the waves' are the varied unique configurations of water that play on its surface. Like waves, each soul, defined by the astronomical pattern that accompanies its embodiment, is unique and may or may not be harmoniously compatible with other souls, who are associated with different astronomical patterns.

The relationship between the varied soul-manifestations may be harmonious or disharmonious; but in the underlying Consciousness (the level of the implicate order), as in the depths of the ocean, there is no differentiation, no multiplicity, and therefore no relationship which may be either compatible or conflicting. At the level of the explicate order, from the perspective of a particular soul, another soul may indeed appear to be incompatible, unlovable, and indeed unlikable; while, at the level of the implicate order, all souls are in fact inseparably one in the

indivisible unity of Consciousness. The question of how we are to reconcile these two seemingly irreconcilable perspectives is one to which we have as yet found no answer.

I am convinced that, so long as we are embodied on this earth, there are two complementary identities within us: one, an undifferentiated continuum of Consciousness which we usually refer to as ‘the eternal Self’; and the other, an assembly of predispositions, habits, and karmic history, that we refer to as ‘an individual soul’. And until we come to terms with both complementary aspects of our identity, we cannot wholly know who we really are; we cannot know the full truth about ourselves.

Many spiritual teachers have advised that this ensemble of qualities that comprises the individual soul must become transparent to the light of God, the eternal Self who is within us, so that those finer divine qualities may shine through. One such spiritual advisor, Meister Eckhart (1260-1327), put it this way: “The very best and utmost of attainment in this life is to remain still and let God act and speak in thee.”

God, our eternal Self, has created everything from Himself, and so, ultimately, all is God. But within His creation, there are *apparent* dualities—such as body-soul, matter-space, the One-the many—all *appearances* only. “I” and “Thou” is another of these apparent dualities. So Meister Eckhart’s saying “let God act and speak in thee,” presumes a duality between “God” and “thee” which is only an apparent duality; there is no *real* distinction between the two—and yet there certainly appears to be a distinction: “I”, the individual soul, am that separate ego, that isolated “me” that stands over against the all-embracing One in whom all the universe exists. My little mind engages in self-centered noise and chatter; God’s Mind is pure clarity and inspiration—so, clearly, “I” must be still, and let God do all the speaking and acting. But these two, “I” and “God”, are simply two different perspectives from two different levels of consciousness in the same manifest individual. They are what David Bohm called the Explicate Order and the Implicate Order.

From the perspective of one’s individualized consciousness—what we refer to as “the soul”—God is other; God is the heavenly Father in whom we live and move and have our being. Our relationship to Him is to a hazily perceived Overseer who guides and inspires us. But from the perspective of the illumined soul, dissolved in and made one with the Divine Consciousness that is God, the duality of ‘I’ and ‘Thou’ that is apparent only in the world of time and space vanishes, and the only

perspective remaining is that of the One who alone is—the Implicate Order and not the Explicate Order.

Still, the *apparent* duality persists through habit, through the long-accustomed habit of separating one's *individual* identity from the One, creating an "I" and a "Thou" where only the One truly exists. So, while this *apparent* duality exists (i.e., while we are embodied), the practical solution would seem to be to regard the two—"I" and "Thou"—as complementary. Of course, when the true eternal Self is revealed, both I and Thou will vanish, and only the One will experience Its ever-present existence. The fact is, while we are always the nondual Reality, we are temporarily confined to a Divinely-produced universe of complementary identities, both of which must be thoroughly known and acknowledged.

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NOTES:

I. from 'The Coincidence of Science And Mysticism':

1. Neils Bohr: "Evidence obtained under different experimental conditions cannot be comprehended within a single picture, but [it] must be regarded as *complementary* in the sense that only the totality of the phenomena exhausts the possible information about the objects." From "Discussions with Einstein on Epistemological Problems in Atomic Physics", in P. Schilpp, *Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist*; New York, Open Court Publishing, 1949.
2. From James Jeans, Aberdeen Address to the British Association For The Advancement of Science, 1934, "The New World-Picture of Modern Physics". The full text of James Jeans' 1934 Aberdeen Address may be found at:

[history.mcs.st-http://www-and.ac.uk/history/Extras/BA_1934_J1.html](http://www-and.ac.uk/history/Extras/BA_1934_J1.html)

3. *Ibid.*
4. See the description of that experience in my book, *The Supreme Self*, available as a free download at the Downloads page on my website at: www.themysticsvision.com.

II. from ‘Two Versions of Reality?’:

1. Neils Bohr: “Evidence obtained under different experimental conditions cannot be comprehended within a single picture, but [it] must be regarded as *complementary* in the sense that only the totality of the phenomena exhausts the possible information about the objects.” Quote is from: “Discussions with Einstein on Epistemological Problems in Atomic Physics”. In P. Schilpp. *Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist*; New York, Open Court Publishing, 1949.

III. from ‘David Bohm’s Implicate Order’:

1. Bohm, David, *Wholeness And The Implicate Order*, London, Routledge, 1980; p. 172.
2. Bohm, David, *Wholeness And Implicate Order*, London, Routledge, 1980. (For a a brief, intelligent and lucid exposition of Bohm’s visionary physics, see “Lifework of David Bohm”, by Will Keepin at:
http://www.vision.net.au/~apaterson/science/david_bohm.htm)
3. For more information on the mystical interpretation of astrological synchrony, please see my website: www.theastrologersvision.com.

IV. from ‘The Synchronicity of Cosmos And Psyche’:

1. Tarnas, Richard, *Cosmos And Psyche*, New York, Viking, 2006; p. 68.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 468.
3. *Ibid.*, P. 489.

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X. SWAMI MUKTANANDA

Swami Muktananda was a great seer and master of spiritual knowledge. I am proud to state that I was his disciple from 1972 to 1981. It appeared that there were karmic ties between us, and so, in 1972, I left my solitary cabin in the woods, and went to live with him in India. I served him for nearly ten years, an experience I shall never forget. But eventually it became clear to me that our paths were incompatible, and I left. Nonetheless, I respect him as a genuine guru and bestower of Grace, and I continue to honor his memory in my heart.

1. My Life With Baba Muktananda (3-15-14; rev. 3-20-2016)

It has been thirty-two years since the passing of Baba Muktananda; and before I join him, I would like to offer this small tribute to the man and his legacy. It is a tale I had resolved not to tell, as it had the potential to be embarrassing to both Baba and to me, and for many years I have kept it to myself. But now, at this late age, and with the prompting of the Guru, I feel that its telling might just have a beneficial effect after all. Time alone will tell:

I.

From 1966 to 1972 I lived in a cozy little cabin in the Santa Cruz mountains, where I had experienced intimate union with God in what is usually referred to as a ‘mystical’ experience. In 1970, I met Swami Muktananda when he was giving a lecture at Stevenson College at the University of California at Santa Cruz. At the time, it had been my custom to pass out a little booklet containing two songs, or Psalms, in downtown Santa Cruz in front of the main bookstore. I was standing at my usual post in front of the bookstore, when a kindly-faced man stopped to read my little booklet of Psalms. I asked if he lived in Santa Cruz, and he replied, “No, I’m just passing through.” We exchanged a warm smile at the deeper meaning of his words, and he put two dollars in my little money box and then moved on. Later, I learned his name was Baba Ram Das, and he was in town to introduce Swami Muktananda, a Swami from India, at the College that night.

A young man, named Stephen, who frequently visited my cabin, brought tickets for the lecture early in the evening, and I paid for mine with the two dollars I had been given earlier. It was a magical night; the sky was filled with stars, and I felt strangely exhilarated to be seeing this Swami from India. During the lecture, I paid less attention to his words than to his presence. I was mesmerized by his totally unexpected appearance and mannerisms. He played with the microphone cord nervously as he spoke and seemed almost bursting with joyous energy. I was in the balcony, and I kept losing his form in a blue haze into which he seemed to keep dissolving. I was totally enthralled by him.

When he was finished speaking, and left the stage, I rushed down the stairs, and made my way up the aisle toward him. Baba Ram Das was leading the chanting from the stage, and Muktananda was heading down the aisle right toward me. I held both my hands out to him, and he tipped up his sunglasses, which he wore even in the relative darkness, to get a better look at me. Then he slapped my

outstretched hands in greeting and went on out to his waiting car. I followed him out, and stood outside the window of his car, waving to him, intoxicated with the sight and presence of him as I had never been before with any person. And then his driver drove him away. I assumed at the time that I would never see him again.

It was several months later that a friend brought me a copy of Muktananda's spiritual autobiography, called "Guru" (later retitled *Chitshakti Vilas*, "The Play of Consciousness"); and I read it with great amazement and awe. I learned that Swami Muktananda (1908-1982) had been a wandering *sadhu* in India since his early teens, had lived in the ashrams of various teachers and had met many saints and holy men, but he had not met his spiritual master until he was initiated by Bhagavan Nityananda in 1947. Nityananda, I learned, was a great and powerful yogi who had wandered naked most of his life, meditating for long periods of time in caves and wildernesses, and who had finally settled in Ganeshpuri, about 30 miles north of Bombay, where a small village and the Ashram of Swami Muktananda now exists.

Nityananda had been known as an *avadhut*, a renunciant who had no more worldly attachments, and who was free as the wind, wandering with no home, no clothes, taking food as it came to him. He was recognized as having enormous yogic powers; and prior to the time of his death in 1961, he had transmitted his immense power to Muktananda, and Muktananda carried on the tradition in the lineage of Siddhas—perfect masters. Earlier, Muktananda had been sent by his guru into a prolonged period of *sadhana*, or spiritual retreat, and after years of solitary meditation—during which time he went through many amazing and wonderful inner experiences as a result of the awakening of his *kundalini*—he eventually became Self-realized at the age of forty-nine, by the grace of God, the Guru.

It was late in the evening when I finished reading *Guru*, Baba's spiritual autobiography, and when I held it to my forehead by way of reverence, a great eye appeared before my mind's eye. It was large and as clear as anything I had ever seen; and I stared at it wonderingly for quite a while before it disappeared. I had not previously thought I was in need of a *guru*, but after reading his book, I decided that such a teacher could help me to progress in the spiritual life and learn to retain the experience of my eternal Self. And so, I wrote to him in India, to whence he had returned, asking if I could come there as his disciple. When I received his welcoming reply, I was overjoyed.

Sadly, but gratefully, I said goodbye to my wonderful cabin, where I had experienced such joy and revelation, and went off, half way across the country, to work my way to India, as, at the time, I hadn't a dime. I met many hardships on

the way; but, unexpectedly, my dear friend, Marc Savage (Dharmananda), who had given me Muktananda's book, wrote to me, asking me to come back to California, saying that he would give me the money to purchase an airline ticket to India. And that is how I made my way to the Ashram of Swami Muktananda in Ganeshpuri, India.

The Ashram was nestled on the outskirts of a small village, and as the local bus approached it, I could see a large castle-shaped building with orange flags flying from its highest pinnacles. It was breathtaking. Muktananda was unexpectedly sitting on a tree-planter at the entrance when I arrived. I removed my shoes, bowed to him clumsily, and then entered the Ashram proper, which consisted of a large courtyard paved with multi-colored stones, surrounded by several buildings, including the meditation hall, the dormitories, and Muktananda's living quarters. There were about forty other Westerners there at the time, both men and women, from the U.S., Europe, and Australia.

The atmosphere of the place was very serene and holy, while at the same time charged with an unfamiliar electric spiritual energy. We arose at 3:30 AM for meditation, then chanting from 6:30 to 8:30. Meditation was held in various places: one could sit in the space around Baba's residence, or one could go below to 'the meditation cave', a dark, unventilated, mosquito-infested place that had been enlivened by Baba's energetic presence during his early stay at this location. Having heard rumors of this austere meditation cave, I was reluctant to go there, preferring to sit in the upper hall. But one morning I decided to give it a try, and so I made my way down the dark passage to the meditation cave. The moment I entered the cave doorway, everything went blue—a rich deep, effervescent blue. But it was not in the outer lighting; the blue was in my head. My inner consciousness had suddenly become imbued with blue. This experience lasted for the whole time of my first visit to the meditation cave. But I never felt comfortable in there, and I returned only a few times.

After the morning chanting session of *the Guru Gita*, we were given a breakfast of chai and chapattis or runny cereal, after which we worked in the gardens or cleaned the toilets. More chanting, lunch, more work, dinner and then the evening chants. In between, there were the frequent *darshans* (appearances) of Baba Muktananda, for which all the ashramites lived. When he sat on his little perch, just outside his quarters, all of us would gather around just to gaze on his form. Sometimes he would receive visitors; sometimes he would just sit there quietly. He appeared to be more of a god than a man. His lightly chocolate form shone more brightly than burnished gold, and his divine presence filled the courtyard with a blissful serenity.

We, the ashramites, would stand and look at him for as long as we were allowed to. He lived in a state of quietude so profound that we were drawn into deep meditation just by standing in his presence. At other times, he was quite animated, directing the many activities of the large Ashram. There was no mistaking that he was a uniquely great and noble being. I was to learn, much later, that he was flawed like all men; but he was as close to a perfected being as I have ever known. I was aware that I was very fortunate to be a disciple of the great Kundalini master, Swami Muktananda, known by his devotees more familiarly as Baba. He was a Guru, in the true sense of the word. ‘The Guru’ is just another name for the Divine as He manifests within and through a perfectly surrendered individual. It is God, the Guru, who gives grace, though it may manifest *through* an individual. In the Kashmir Shaivite tradition to which Baba belonged, this transmission of Grace is called *shaktipat*, the gift of Shakti, or divine energy. The transmission of *shaktipat* was such a common experience around Baba that nearly everyone who spent any time around him received his blessing of Grace in one manner or another.

Shakti is a subtle form of energy that manifests at several levels of the human organism: At the spiritual level it manifests as an increase in conscious awareness and bliss and is centered at the crown of the head. At the mental level it manifests as an increase in intelligence, metaphysical understanding, and creativity and is centered between the eyebrows. At the physical level it manifests as an increase in sexual sensitivity and desire and is centered in the genitalia. It is often this baser, physical increase that is experienced most predominantly, and which must be suppressed or otherwise transcended in order to manifest the shakti at subtler levels.

Baba emanated shakti; it was palpably felt whenever he entered a room. He could direct it willfully, or simply by thinking of someone. He could impart his shakti by a thought, a word, a touch, or simply by his proximity. Even his clothes or items in his environment emanated that shakti. I remember once, when Baba was asked to address a Transpersonal Psychology conference in Boston, the entire auditorium full of doctors and scholars was electrified with his spiritual energy, and one person in the back of the room asked him, “What are you doing to us?” and everyone knew what the questioner was talking about. Baba just smiled.

An individual, such as Baba, who embodies the Guru and who is able to transmit divine energy in this manner is extremely rare. In Muktananda’s case, this ability was imparted to him by another rare being, his Guru, Bhagavan Nityananda. Nityananda left his body in 1961, so I never met him, but I visited his old residence in 1972, and the shakti permeating the place was still palpable. The direct

transmission of shakti from Nityananda to Baba Muktananda is reminiscent of that from John the Baptist to Jesus of Nazareth. John had the power of shaktipat, as did Jesus after him. You may recall that when John baptized Jesus and initiated him into the spiritual life, Jesus experienced a white dove flying into his breast. We know of this experience because Jesus later told his disciples of his inner vision at that time. Such an inner visual image sometimes accompanies the transmission of shakti from a genuine Guru. The countries and the religious traditions are different in these two cases, but the gift of divine energy is the same. It is a divine energy accumulated by holy men through austerity, through ascetic devotion. Both John the Baptist and Nityananda were virtual *avadhuts*, souls whose lives were solely devoted to the contemplation of God, while living alone in remote locations under the most austere privations imaginable—whereby they experienced the blessing of God.

I had not realized or understood the meaning of this biblical imagery of the white dove until I experienced it myself by the Grace of God imparted to me by Baba Muktananda. Following is the story of how that transmission of Grace came about:

II.

After I had spent a year and a half at the ashram in Ganeshpuri, Baba notified all the Western ashramites that he had received a loan of \$25,000 from Werner Erhardt, the founder of Est, which he was planning to use to finance a 2nd World Tour to the U.S., and that all of us should make plans to return to our homes and prepare for his visitation. Later, it was revealed that Baba was planning to begin his World Tour at a Meditation Center at the home of one of his devotees, Don Harrison, who lived in Piedmont, California. And so, I, along with a few others, left India, and made my way to the affluent community of Piedmont, California, where I and a few other young men were pressed into service, completely repainting Don's house, and working at the local Flea Market selling items from Don's import business to support our keep.

Finally, the day of Baba's arrival came. How wonderful it was to see him again! He was, to me and to all his disciples, the very manifestation of God. After he was able to rest and settle in for a day or so, he held a chanting session in the small meditation hall of the Meditation Center. To me, his face seemed unusually gaunt and hollow, very ethereal, as he stood at the front of the hall chanting 'Rama Raghava'. His face called up in me the image of Jesus in his suffering, as Baba intoned the baleful chant of "Rama, protect me; Rama, deliver me." I was standing at the back of the hall, directly opposite and facing him. Tears began coursing

down my cheeks as I stood there, feeling so much love and compassion for him. It was clear that Baba was also aware of me, as he stared intently at me while he chanted.

When the chanting was over, and Baba had returned to his rooms upstairs, Baba's attendant, Noni, approached me, saying Baba wanted to see me in his quarters. I was shocked and surprised, but I followed Noni upstairs and into Baba's presence. He spoke to me in Hindi as he stepped out of his slippers, while Noni translated: "Take these." I could think of nothing to say, as I was keenly aware that this was precisely how the great Bhagavan Nityananda himself had originally initiated Baba. I went to my knees and placed my forehead on his sandals, as Baba continued speaking while Noni translated: "Go back to your home and prepare for my coming," he said. I could only manage to reply, "Ji, Baba." And then Baba said something else as he waved me away. Later, when I was able to ask Noni what he had said, he told me that Baba was only complaining that he had only just broken in that pair of slippers, and now he would have to break in another pair.

I flew back to Indianapolis that next day. Though I did not relish the prospect of returning to my boyhood home, I was eager to do whatever Baba asked, certain that it was in my very best interests; and I was filled with wonder and anticipation for whatever was to come. I was ill prepared, however, for the tragedy that was to ensue.

Baba had put one of his recently acquired devotees in the position of overseeing and taking charge of the events of his Tour. This individual's name was David P. He had obtained his managerial experience as the head of the department of Waste Management in Oakland, California; and Baba had entrusted this relative newcomer to manage the schedule of his appearances on the Tour as he moved from the West Coast eastward. Indianapolis was scheduled to occur right after the Chicago event. But it seems that David P. was not happy with Indianapolis being on the schedule, and he tried to cancel that appearance, but Baba insisted. It was then that David apparently hatched the plan to sabotage the Indianapolis event from his end. He sent a young Indianapolis native whom I had known in Ganeshpuri ostensibly to assist me in setting up the Indianapolis event, but in actuality he was there to act as David's informant and saboteur.

Plans moved along, and a Civic Center appearance was scheduled along with a weekend Meditation Retreat at a picturesque Franciscan monastery on the edge of town. When Baba arrived with his entourage, Baba's staff, under David's supervision, took over the implementation and record-keeping of the event.

Everything went smoothly, drawing moderate crowds. All in all, it was a success, and at the end of the Meditation Retreat, I had a brief moment with Baba, who told me to “Stay here.” That was the extent of his instructions. And then the circus left town. David P., acting as Baba’s manager, had made sure that I received no names of the event’s participants and was left with no means whatsoever of forming a community of devotees in Indianapolis. Nonetheless, that was exactly what Baba had expected of me.

I had the assistance of two middle aged sisters both of whom had attended the Meditation Retreat and met Baba. They had been devotees of Roy Eugene Davis, a direct disciple of Yogananda Paramahansa, but were now enthusiastic to help me build a Baba Muktananda Meditation Center in Indianapolis. A dentist who owned a large house in an old section of Indianapolis was willing to sell it to me at a ridiculously low price as a residential Meditation Center. The problem was that I had no way to contact those who had already shown their interest by coming to see Baba during his visit to the city. I tried advertising in the newspaper, with no results. I wrote to Baba asking for the records of attendance from the Civic Center appearance and the Meditation Retreat. But no reply. My phone calls to the California ashram where Baba was now residing were answered only by David P. Unknown to me, he had given orders to the other ashram phone operators that he alone was to take my calls, and that all my letters were to go to him. When I called, he would say that he would talk to Baba, and get back to me. This unkind game continued on and on, for months, but I never heard from him.

There was a limit to how long my dentist friend would wait for a reply to his offer to buy the house. But without Baba’s word, I could not make a move. I called Baba repeatedly, but I was never able to reach him. Whatever power of meditation I possessed also failed me; I had no idea what he intended me to do. Even the two sisters who were so supportive in the beginning were now losing faith that Baba had any interest in supporting my efforts. I held chanting sessions, but in the end, no one came. Not even my parents. I would have bought the house anyway, if Baba had told me to. But it was too late. He hadn’t called; and it was time to give up my option on the house.

I was totally confused. What was Baba’s lesson in all of this? Why did he put me here? To teach me how helpless I was? Was there some hidden reason for his refusal to send me some word when I had so deliberately explained the urgency of my predicament and so poignantly pleaded with him to contact me? I was at a total loss to explain his treatment of me. But I still believed in him; I was still utterly devoted to him. There was nothing left to do but return to him. That was

the only way I would learn the lesson of this entire fiasco. And so, I left Indianapolis, and went back to Oakland, California where, I had heard, Baba was going to establish a new ashram.

III.

The building that he had chosen for his new ashram was an old hotel that had become a whore-house and was now shuttered up. It was in a previously all-black neighborhood, and there had been no buyers, though it had been on the market for some time. When I first saw it, it was ankle deep in dog feces. Two angry and emaciated Saint Bernards had been housed in the old hotel as guard dogs with a free run of the place. It was going to take a great deal of work to transform it into Baba's ashram. But Baba had a crew of devotees—carpenters, laborers, cooks, and painters who all descended on the old hotel—I among them. And within months, a sparkling beautiful ashram with a huge carpeted meditation hall, and freshly-painted, well-appointed rooms for the ashramites, awaited Baba's arrival.

When he came, there was a great celebration; people attended from all over. And on that first night's darshan in the meditation hall, when the lights went down, and everyone entered deep into meditation, I was intently awake to Baba's presence, with a keen hope for some indication from him as to what that whole Indianapolis adventure had been all about. It was not long before he found me in the crowd and entered me. "Go back!" he shrieked from within me. But my heart rebelled, my emotional frustration exploded, thrusting him forcefully from his place in my heart. Months had passed since I had left Indianapolis. Couldn't he have given me that message back then? But my heart's rebellious response wasn't a reasoned one; it was a response born of his "Go back!" and was entirely beyond my control.

Immediately after the meditation period, Baba left the hall, and I caught a glimpse of his infuriated glare focused on me. I regretted my instinctual response, but I could not take it back; nor did I feel that I initiated it. It had only been a natural response to the cruel degradation of a tortured soul, which, I felt, should have been handled differently. If only he had called me aside for a chat! But I had no time to rationalize my response. Word came that Baba had suffered a stroke, and I was outside, watching, as he was taken on a gurney to the ambulance and on to the hospital.

When at last some ashramites were allowed to visit him where he was recovering, I was included among those who were first to see him. As soon as he saw me, he turned away from me, and I fell with my head on his belly while sobbing his name. When eventually he returned to the ashram, I received the same treatment: if he

was out walking, and saw me, he would cross the street to be on the opposite side. Whenever I was around, he would avoid even looking at me. Only a true lover can know what this treatment did to me, how devastating it was to me to experience this rejection and contempt from one who was so beloved. And never a word of explanation.

After some time, Baba flew back to India, leaving me there in the Oakland ashram. He left instructions with the ashram director that I should be given a position in the ashram, and I was assigned to be the Food Buyer, which required me to get up early, drive to the Farmer's Market, and purchase whatever fruits and vegetables were required by the kitchen and by the recently built Amrit snack bar. I also served as the *pujari*, performing the evening worship ceremony, and as the ashram librarian. I was still tormented, however, by the unexplained events in Indianapolis; and in early 1977 I decided to write to Baba at his ashram in Ganeshpuri to apologize for my egregious response to his command and to seek an explanation for what transpired in Indianapolis. I informed him of my inability to obtain any contact information about the attendees to the speaking engagement and the Retreat, I explained my attempts to get a reply from him on the road, my dependence on his reply for the purchase of the house, and my various efforts to establish a Meditation Center in Indianapolis without benefit of any contacts or instructions. Again, I hoped for some explanation from him, but received none.

I can only infer that when Baba received that letter he learned for the first time what had happened in Indianapolis. When he originally sent me to Indianapolis from Piedmont, it was out of the highest motives. He had not been responsible for any of the plotting against me and he had known nothing of it. That had been the sole doing of David P. I can only imagine the wrath Baba expressed to David when he confronted him after receiving my letter. David was apparently banished thereafter from seeing Baba and from all the ashrams. Baba then determined to make right his unfair treatment of me. It was still 1977, less than a month after I had sent my letter of explanation, when we suddenly got word that Baba was flying from India to Oakland, California, for an impromptu visit to our ashram. Though it had been unanticipated, we were all naturally excited by the prospect of his visit.

On the first night of his arrival many people came to the evening program for Baba's darshan and the celebration of his return to Oakland. And later that night, after everyone had settled into bed, I took up my usual post in the meditation hall, where I often spent the night, serving as overnight watchman while enjoying the enhanced spiritual atmosphere of the hall where Baba had earlier appeared. As was my custom, I lay with my head on Baba's slippers which had been

permanently placed there before his seat as objects of worship and devotion. Sometime in the night I awoke to the sense of Baba's presence in the form of a white dove visibly perched at the portal to the kitchen where ashramites gathered daily to receive their meals. I was able to see this in spiritual vision, although that portal was separated from me by a wall. I watched as the dove left its perch, flew straight for me, and entered my chest with a great flurry of beating wings. I knew it was Baba, but I wasn't cognizant of the meaning of this event at the time it was occurring. Only later, I realized that I had received the gift of the Guru's grace.

During the course of that year, 1977, following Baba's gracious visitation, many wonderful events came to pass. One evening, as I was making my rounds, doing puja to all of the images of the saints decorating the ashram walls, I was stunned to hear a voice from the painting of the medieval saint, Jnaneshvar as I stopped to do puja before it. The voice said, "You have translated the *Haripatha* of Ecknath Maharaj; why not translate my *amritanubhav*." I said, "Of course," though I hadn't even read that work at the time. But I was able to quickly translate the works of Jnaneshvar, though I know nothing of the Marathi language; and shortly thereafter I translated the *avadhut gita* in just a few days, though I had no training in Sanskrit. I then wrote to Baba, telling him that the twelve years was now up since my vow to become a Swami, and that I would like to be a part of the upcoming *sannyas* initiation. I was enabled to work part-time outside the ashram for another ashramite who managed a fruit-stand, whereby I saved enough money to afford a round-trip ticket to India in early 1978 where, to everyone else's surprise, Baba initiated me into *sannyas*, and I became thereafter one of Baba's teaching Swamis.

The Guru's grace is real. Do not doubt it. And be certain as well that it flows from the divine Source, from God Himself. The human instrument is fallible to be sure; but divine Grace is God's unfailing energy at work in you to enable you to attain all that you are destined to become in this life. If you are fortunate enough to live in the presence of such an embodiment of the Guru, by all means seek his Grace, and rely upon him. Only if he betrays the trust he has been given by God, will he fall from God's Grace, and you will have no choice but to leave his service. Sadly, however, there are very few true representatives of the Guru in these current days.

After the *sannyas* initiation, Baba gave me the name, Swami Abhayananda ("the bliss of fearlessness"), and I was sent to the New York Meditation Center and ashram to train as a teacher and ashram director. At the same time, Baba okayed the purchase of a large hotel in Fallsburg, New York in the Catskill mountains to serve as the main ashram and headquarters for his organization. Many ashramites

from the New York Center and other Centers, including myself, pitched in to help transform another hotel into a gleaming and glorious ashram, where Baba was to hold many Intensives and give frequent darshans in the following few years.

In early 1979, while I was living in a New York apartment across from the ashram where I taught as a swami, I awoke in the night with the distinct sense that someone was in the bedroom with me; an invisible someone who was very angry and threatening. I sat up and sternly ordered this presence to get out of my room. By the power of my own soul-force, I forcefully commanded it to go, and it left. Shortly thereafter, I was again awakened with a call from the ashram across the street, telling me that there was a phone call for me over there. I went over, and spoke to my father on the phone, who informed me that my mother had just died. When I returned to my apartment, the thought came to me that it had been my mother who had come to me earlier, and her anger was because I had not come to be with her during her illness. Somehow, I was able to call her back to me, and a touching reconciliation occurred between mother and son, whereby I was able to assure her of my love. An additional glowing presence, whom I was sure was Baba, was also there, and I watched as he lifted her on high and guided her, now free, to her “heavenly” destination. There was a great sense of gratification that all resentment had been assuaged between us, and that she had been guided to a “higher” place. This was no small gift. To this day I am gratefully beholden to Baba for enabling this visitation with my departed mother and our loving reconciliation.

Once the renovation of the Catskill Hotel in Fallsburg, New York, was completed, it had become the Siddha Yoga Ashram and Headquarters, and many of the Swamis spent a great deal of time there close to Baba. It was there, on the evening of August 14, 1979, I waited my turn in the darshan line, and offered to Baba Muktananda the following letter of devotion:

August 14, 1979

Dearest Babaji,

Please accept this small token of my affection on the occasion of this, my 41st birthday:

Gurudev, I have been a fool all my life.

What is worthy of loving, I have hated;

What is worthy of running away from, I have sought to embrace.

I seem to have earned in my past births

Nothing more than this perverse understanding.

Having spent so many years in foolishness,

Falling prey over and over again to lust, anger and pride,
 I am now celebrating the addition
 Of one more year to this wasted life.
 Gurudev, who could even feel pity for such a fool?
 Yet you have covered me with your wings,
 And cradled me in the compassion of your heart.
 You have nursed me in my sorrows—
 Consoled me with your loving words,
 And forgiven all my unforgivable errors.
 You have stood as a father beside me,
 Even though I had turned my back to you.
 There are no words to express your greatness,
 Or to express my unworthiness of your grace;
 Yet you have bent to me your ear and saved me in my distress.
 Dear Lord, what can I offer you who have inspired
 Even the gods to look compassionately upon me?
 I have nothing worthy of offering to you.
 Even this trickle of love that I am able to squeeze from this dry heart
 Already belongs to you—is, in fact, your gift.
 So, you see, I have nothing but myself to offer.
 Worthless rag that I am, I am yours.
 Please do with me as you will.
 Make of me your perfect slave.
 My dear Gurudev, please grant this request.

I am forever your own,
 Swami Abhayananda

I then took my seat and watched as Swami Nityananda (still known as Subash at that time) translated the letter to Baba, and I could see that Baba was pleased. Some months later, I was given the directorship of a small Ashram in Philadelphia, and after a year in that position, I was sent to Chicago to run the fledgling Ashram in that city. After another year, I was sent to Oklahoma City to establish an Ashram there. It was there, in June of 1981, I learned of Muktananda's long history of sexual indiscretions with some of his young female devotees, and the threats and intimidations used to silence those whom he had engaged and those who knew of these activities. Naturally, I was devastated by this revelation. With a feeling of confusion and betrayal, I immediately left Muktananda's service, feeling that I could no longer represent him in good conscience.

My life had seemed, up to that point, a perfect one. My greatest ambitions had been fulfilled: I had realized God and had become a Swami in the glorious Siddha tradition. But now, all had been discredited; I was without a home, without a tradition, and rejected as an infidel by my former companions. I had written an open letter to his devotees detailing what I knew; but, naturally, most refused to believe their beloved guru capable of the acts of which I had accused him. Those accusations were later proven to be true, but, at the time, I was regarded by all my old friends as a liar and an apostate. Baba never either acknowledged or denied his guilt.

I ended up in a farmhouse owned by a generous ex-devotee in Fallsburg, New York, not far from Muktananda's main Ashram, and remained in hiding, fearful for my life, until Muktananda's death in October of 1982, at the age of 74. For seven years I stayed in that isolated farmhouse, until 1988, living as a recluse, attempting to make sense of the unfortunate turn of events which had brought me to my present situation. It was there I began writing *The Supreme Self* and several other books, including *History of Mysticism*; and I published them myself under the imprint of Atma Books. If I could no longer teach, at least I could tell my story of God-realization in hopes of benefiting others. When I reflect on my life, I see that it has unfolded and is unfolding just as it was ordained by God to do: my freedom from organizational duties, though painfully acquired, allowed me to finally do what my destiny required me to do: by the grace of God and Guru, I was enabled to give all my time to speaking out in praise of God, for the benefit of all His children.

It is good to remember that the Guru and the individual who is His instrument are not the same. The Guru remains eternally, though a man (or woman) can always go astray. After many years, I have learned to accept the fallibility of the man I had once regarded as infallible; yet I love him still. During my years with Baba, I came to know of his godlike powers, and received his generous and amazing grace. To this day, I still hold Swami Muktananda in the highest esteem, with great respect and love, despite his inexplicable behavior. He will be remembered by all who knew him as a great, though contradictory, soul. He was a uniquely gifted yogi and an unfathomable personality, who blessed the lives of thousands of devoted students throughout the world. His most familiar message, delivered at the end of his many lectures, was "Honor yourself, love yourself, worship yourself; for your beloved God lives within you as you."

* * *

2. What Is A Swami? (from *The Divine Universe*, 2008)

It's a question that comes up from time to time, and I've learned that I cannot really say what being a Swami means for all Swamis, but I can at least try to say what it means to me. I was living in a secluded cabin in the Santa Cruz mountains when it first dawned on me that I wanted to be a Swami. I had gone to live in that cabin in my spiritual quest for enlightenment, and I had been reading many books on Indian philosophy as well as books on Western religious philosophy. I was impressed by what Sri Ramakrishna's disciple, Swami Vivekananda, said about *sannyasa*, and also by these words of Sarvepali Radhakrishnan:

“A sannyasin [monk, swami] renounces all possessions, distinctions of caste, and practices of religion. As he has perfected himself, he is able to give his soul the largest scope, throw all his powers into the free movement of the world and compel its transfiguration. He does not merely formulate the conception of high living but lives it, adhering to the famous rule, ‘The world is my country; to do good my religion’. Regarding all with an equal eye he must be friendly to all living beings. And being devoted, he must not injure any living creature, human or animal, either in act, word, or thought, and renounce all attachments. A freedom and fearlessness of spirit, an immensity of courage, which no defeat or obstacle can touch, a faith in the power that works in the universe, a love that lavishes itself without demand of return and makes life a free servitude to the universal spirit, are the signs of the perfected man.”¹

Well, who wouldn't want to be such a person? It was during this same period of time that I was given to experience a profound illumination from God, revealing the spiritual depth of my true being; and shortly thereafter, I made myself and God a promise: that I would first give myself a twelve-year period of spiritual study and growth, then I would become a Swami. That was in 1966, and in 1978 I was able to fulfill that promise. After a paradisaical five years in my cabin in the woods, I traveled to Ganeshpuri, India and became a disciple of the famous Kundalini master, Swami Muktananda.

Now, Muktananda (affectionately known by his disciples as “Baba”) is known by many today as a man who made a tragic mistake in his later years, just prior to his death in 1982, by inappropriately sharing his physical affections with a number of his young female disciples. Many of us will also make great mistakes in our lives, especially as we age; and it is a terrible shame that Muktananda's great legacy of

loving wisdom should be so tarnished by the memory of a few misdeeds in the latter period of his life. I was one of those who left his organization in protest and who spoke out condemning those misdeeds, and they needed to be condemned. But, because of those unfortunate events, few of the public today know of the greatness that was Swami Muktananda. His was a spiritual presence that touched the lives of hundreds, even thousands, of souls and lifted them to an experience of God in their lives through the generous gift of his own heart's immense compassion and love. Those who sat in his presence know, as no others can, that despite his human imperfections, he was indeed a great saint, possessing immense compassion and awesome power.

In 1978, I was working in Muktananda's Oakland ashram, when I wrote to Baba in India informing him that the 12 years of my apprenticeship had expired and that it was time for me to become a Swami. He then invited me to Ganeshpuri to take part in the *sannyasin* initiations that were to take place in May at the time of his birthday. There were about a dozen of us, both Indians and Westerners to be initiated, and an appointed *Mahamandeshvar* (ceremonial official) named Swami Brahmananda Sarasvati of the Shringeri Math was on hand to direct the proceedings. After performing the Vedic rituals of offering rice balls to our ancestors, and after having the last remaining 'brahmin's tuft of hair' shorn from our heads, signifying the transcendence of all castes, we performed the culminating ceremony of discarding our old clothes while standing waist deep in a cold raging river at midnight, and the receiving of the Swami's ochre robes. After that, we were Swamis, monks of the prestigious Sarasvati Order.

But, of course, it is not the ritual ceremony that makes a Swami; it is the heart's desire, the commitment to a spiritually dedicated life, and the favor of God and one's Guru. I was to know the awesome power of Muktananda's grace to his Swamis, a grace that enlivened the world and my soul with a brightness that revealed God's sparkling beauty within and without. Through no merit of my own, I experienced a divine blue light that would indicate to me advanced godly souls by dancing over their heads; I would experience Muktananda's grace being emitted from my own body to sincere devotees; I was even able to experience the transference of spiritual energy to others when someone inadvertently brushed my clothes. It was all his amazing and gracious power, transmitted from him through me, even though he was not present. His loving regard of me, even from far away, was a tangible energy that drew me in awed devotion to know him as the very image of God and distributor of God's grace on this earth.

In Muktananda's organization, SYDA Yoga, Swamis were honored, not so much for their holiness, but for their position in the hierarchy of the Guru's favor. Muktananda, in the tradition of the rajas of India, ruled as king over an orange silk-robed aristocracy or nobility, who always sat in the front nearest the king when he gave audience. Further back were the members of the functional bureaucracy, and behind them the peasants, the visiting mob. The Swamis shared in the teaching role, giving authorized courses and operating the regional Meditation Centers and Ashrams. In the absence of the Guru, they were the connection with the Guru and his teachings. In a way very similar to the monks and priests of the Catholic Church, the Swamis of SYDA Yoga made up an organizational hierarchy of representatives of the Siddha line.

But just as in the Catholic Church there were, and still are to some degree, lone contemplative hermits and anchorites who live among the people, in India there are many *sannyasins* who wander freely and independently, living the worshipful and contemplative life or teaching and lecturing and living by the charity of the citizenry. One can easily see, however, that such a class of religious itinerant beggars would not be feasible in Western countries. What, then, is a Western Swami to do? How is he (or she) to carry on his or her chosen vocation?

We must understand at the outset that a Swami transcends not only all Hindu caste designations, but all sectarian religious designations as well. A Swami is not (necessarily) a Hindu. The ideal Swami is learned in *all* religious traditions, and he is familiar as well with current science and literature. He is an enlightened and learned soul, and he is solely dedicated to God and the well-being of all God's children. After I had left Muktananda's organization, I was faced with the question of how to continue my "mission" as a Swami. My immediate instinct was to share my acquired experience and understanding in the form of writing, and I went on to produce a number of books, all concerned with the "mystical experience" and the Self-knowledge obtained thereby.

There was also, of course, the necessity of meeting the expenses of living in this world; and this I managed to do by obtaining a license as a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) and working primarily as a Home Health Aide for elderly and infirm patients in their homes. For the twenty-five years since I left Siddha Yoga, I have written my books, seen to their publication, and daily served the many patients I was assigned to: victims of stroke, cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, heart disease, and senile dementia with hands-on care. I no longer parade about in orange silk robes; rather, I live a simple solitary life as a servant; I promote my books, presenting them and offering them as free downloadable ebooks at my online

website: www.themysticsvision.com; and I spend a good deal of time in reflection and inward communion with God. According to our brother, Socrates:

This is that life above all others which man should live,
 ... holding converse with the true Beauty, simple and
 divine. In that communion only beholding Beauty with
 the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not
 images of beauty, but Reality [Itself]; ...and bringing
 forth and nourishing true virtue, to become the friend of
 God and be immortal if mortal man may. Would that be
 an ignoble life?

— Plato, *Symposium*

* * *

3. Another Perspective On Baba Muktananda (8-30-2014)

Dear readers, as many of you know, in June of 1981, I resigned and left my position as a teacher with Baba Muktananda's Siddha Yoga organization in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. And, shortly thereafter, I mailed a letter to many of my comrades in the various Ashrams and Meditation Centers of that organization, sharing with them the information that I had left my position in that organization upon discovering that our Guru, Baba Muktananda, was concealing the fact that he was having sexual relations with a number of his young female disciples, and threatening them with violence if they continued to speak of it. With the intention of warning those vulnerable women still remaining under his influence, I told of the evidence I had uncovered, and of his threats of violence toward those who had spoken to others of his secret life.

For the next thirty years, I was regarded by those who remained in the Siddha Yoga organization as a traitor, a Judas; and I continued to lead my own private life of service to God, having heard nothing in all that time from my old friends and previous comrades in Siddha Yoga. Then, on May 5, 2011, I received an email from one of my previous brother-Swamis, Swami Shankarananda, and we had a prolonged and vigorous interchange of opposing views. Now, once again, three years later, on Friday, August 1, 2014, I received an email letter from another of

my previous fellow-Swamis, Swami Dayananda (Karen Schaefer) whom I had known as Kalyani, accompanied by an article written by her. In her letter, she expressed the wish that somehow it would be possible for me to withdraw my “criticisms of Baba from the 80’s that still have such a damaging effect on people.”

She said, “People read those articles that you wrote then and lose their faith and will not even come close to anything to do with Baba. It’s very sad. But still all of us who received so much and have so many reasons to be grateful and want to repay what he gave to us, continue to attempt to help people put things into a perspective.” And in her accompanying article, she attempts to do just that. Following is a faithful reproduction of Swami Dayananda’s article. It is a remarkable and important testament, shedding much light on the events surrounding Baba that I only vaguely understood at the time that I wrote about him in the 80’s due to the cloak of secrecy that had been cast over them. While Swami Dayananda’s article is admittedly a one-sided and somewhat rosy picture of those events, it very much deserves to be widely read and shared, not only by those who had some association with Baba Muktananda, but by every spiritual aspirant for its wonderful inspiration.

—Swami Abhayananda

Note: *This article does not represent the views of the current administration of the Siddha Yoga organization, whose official stance is that none of this ever happened:*

How An Accomplished Yogi Faces Old Age, Sickness, And Death

Observations On My Life With Baba

by Dayananda, also known as Kalyani (Karen Schaefer).

Introduction

This was one of the most inspiring aspects of my years living close to such an accomplished yogi. I was able to observe him as he aged through the years of his very arduous and wholehearted dedication to the awakening of spiritual energy in tens of thousands of people as he traveled throughout a large part of the world and the tolls that work took on his physical body. I witnessed the extraordinary ways in which he responded to physical illness and at the time was aware that this was one evident sign of his yogic power over his body and mind.

As I myself am aging and facing challenges of health, I am able to draw inspiration from his example and hope this helps to inspire others as well. When you live close to a Guru there are many methods through which he/she can teach, guide and inspire us. Those include through the discipline he may require as part of living near him; formal teachings and answering the questions put to him about the spiritual journey; and very personal situations where the Guru finds the opportunity to give very direct teaching, usually to fast-track our development in meditation and also to break through stubborn negative habits.

All of these are valuable means. But what I absorbed most directly living with Baba were his own attitudes and behaviors in living his life, day in and day out. From those examples I came to understand his ability to bring his meditative and yogic states of transcendent consciousness into daily life. The way he handled certain situations and many of the challenges that arose over the period of years I lived with him, clearly illustrated to me that his relationship with his physical body was not like that of most of us. His yogic lifestyle and practices awarded him extraordinary equanimity that enabled him to overcome conditions that are generally debilitating and overwhelming for most of us as we age.

Part One

When I met him in San Francisco in 1970 he was 60 years old. He had an extraordinary amount of life force, joyful enthusiasm and seemed tireless in approaching his work. Through the 12 years I lived with him he faced multiple health challenges from being diabetic and having an enlarged heart, heart attacks, and eventually he succumbed to a heart attack in October 1982.

Initially when I went to India in 1971 he was celebrating his 62nd birthday in the ashram. During those celebrations with thousands of people visiting him he was indefatigable, it seemed to take several young attendants through the day to keep up with him, assisting him in various activities. He was like a lion, filled with yogic vitality, joy and gusto meeting each person and situation with direct dynamic engagement. He seemed to be much younger than his years.

I lived in the ashram with him for three years from 1971-1973, prior to his second World Tour. During the week days in the ashram life was relatively quiet, with the gentle flow of the daily routine he had set for all residents. There were between 20-30 westerners living there during those periods, and approximately the same amount of Indians, some young boys whom he was educating, retired Indians who came to spend their *vanaprashtra* ¹ phase of life in the ashram, and Indian and

foreign people who would come and stay for periods of school breaks or work holidays.

Ashram life had a rhythm punctuated by the unique characteristics of the different seasons: monsoon rains with the glorious fragrant blossoms that came to life with the rains; the stultifying heat of summer days where the earth cracked open from dryness; and cool winter mornings where a hot cup of chai helped to warm hand and tummy.

Without fail, Baba rose early for his own meditations and visited the temple where he paid respects to his Guru by doing a full-length prostration. During the morning Guru Gita chant he generally participated, often correcting the postures and inattentiveness of the chanters with flying objects, or sharp words. Nothing seemed to escape his attention, as throughout the day he oversaw work in the kitchen, in the gardens, on-going construction projects, fed and trained his elephant Viju and played with his dogs.

Then there was the greeting of visitors who came in endless queues for his darshan—the Indians have a strong faith that just the sight or glance of one of their great saints can sanctify their lives, no matter how dismal their conditions. The poor villagers, powerful politicians, office clerks, film stars, all lined up to see Baba. Those exchanges were often very personal and engaging. Each individual departed feeling blessed through their contact. Baba in no way filled any stereotype ideal one could have about how a saint behaved. His language could at times be rough, harsh if the occasion called for it, often loving, lively and humorous and his behavior always unpredictable and spontaneous.

There was never a dull moment around him, it sometimes felt like a three-ring circus where multiple events were happening simultaneously, and he was orchestrating them all. He could take different roles as required—one minute, disciplining an errant young boy with a stick; the next caressing and blessing a new-born brought by his parents; teasing one of the local village women who daily brought vegetables from her garden, or giving warm hearted words of encouragement and upliftment to a man who having lost his legs came into the courtyard on a wooden platform with wheels.

On Saturday afternoons, the buses from Bombay arrived, with devotees laden with baskets of food carried into the kitchen and lining up to greet Baba with colorful flower garlands and offerings of fruit.

At different times of the year daily life was enhanced with extraordinary activities: 7-day 24-hour chants, sometimes with ecstatic dancing; celebrations of Guru Purnima and Baba's Birthday and *Divya Diksha* days, where thousands of people came by the busloads. They were accommodated on the roof tops of the buildings and even in large tents. Huge *bandharas*—delicious feasts—were prepared and distributed for hours. Brahmin priests came to perform yajnas, fire pujas, often for seven days. For these occasions Baba manifested his kingly manner as he officiated and orchestrated each one of these activities with his extraordinary level of enthusiasm and vigor. Every participant was uplifted by his magnificent generosity of spirit and joyful nature.

Life as an ashramite with him in those years had several constant themes. First, a mandatory and intense level of discipline which entailed participating in every chant throughout the day and doing our *seva*—assigned work chores. Secondly, being trained in various aspects of yogic life including an ayurvedic approach to diet and living with the seasons. And individually, each ashramite received very personal on-going attention to their progress in meditation practice.

He emphasized the discipline for seemingly different reasons: firstly, it eliminated ambivalent visitors to the ashram, only the truly committed could bear the intense heat (*tapasya* as they call it in the Yoga Sutras) of the rigorous lifestyle he demanded. He would occasionally roar through the courtyard with a stick in hand, shouting in a most terrifying manner. We tended to call it his "*Rudra Bhav*".²

Later during the afternoon question and answer session which was translated for the westerners he would giggle and say, "Did you see, it worked, those hippies rolled up their sleeping bags and sneaked out the gate." Ganeshpuri ashram in those days was not a place for spiritual dilettantes or those just looking for a comfortable place to hang out. He also told us that if a serious meditator committed themselves to a daily routine, as one went on into deeper states of meditation, that routine required much less mental effort, one did not have to think about what to do. It was evident that he himself maintained an unvarying daily routine of practices.

Regarding diet and food, he also always emphasized the health benefits of eating only what and how much the body required according to the season and one's ayurvedic constitution; and, again, it was obvious that he himself followed a very strict dietary discipline in spite of the fact that visitors were always bringing food offerings to him. In every aspect of his lifestyle Baba was an exemplary yogi—his

example was truly inspiring and his energy levels were such that anyone observing him could only feel admiration and awe.

He also took great care in watching over the spiritual development of each individual who had made the commitment to live in his Guru Kula. This activity generally was centered in the meditation verandah adjacent to his room. In the center of this verandah was the locked small room which was his original residence when the land was given to him by his Guru Bhagawan Nityananda. He had lived and meditated in that room for many years before the ashram developed, and occasionally he would place a meditator in that room for a very special initiation. (A very poignant point that cannot be overlooked is that ultimately the earth below that one small room became the chamber for his samadhi shrine. Prior to his death he emphasized that room was his one sole property, everything else belonged to the trustees of the ashram.)

Ashramites and regular visitors would sit for meditation in that verandah, and Baba would come out of his room and observe people meditating. He spontaneously gave *shaktipat*, a transmission of meditative experience, in a very individual manner on those occasions. At other times, he would speak with someone in the darshan line, give them the mantra or a pat on the head or cheeks and tell them to go sit for meditation. The transmission of shaktipat, or awakening of meditation, in his tradition was informal and unstructured, according to the individual. The volumes of the Gurudevani Magazine edited by Amma (Swami Prajnananda) were filled with the accounts of the extraordinary experiences people had on such occasions.

Baba had the remarkable capacity to transmit a direct experience of the highest consciousness to individuals who were ready for it. It was then up to the student to honor and preserve that awakened energy through leading a pure lifestyle and doing sadhana practices until such time as it could be stabilized through meditation. He said that one was ready for spiritual awakening when one's positive and negative karmas had become equally balanced. One can find a description of this experience given by Krishna to Arjuna in Chapter 12 of the Bhagavad Gita.

He said that even sometimes this transmission would occur spontaneously; he would feel a certain vibration in his heart, look around and could see by the expression on some seeker's face that they were experiencing an awakening of the powerful Kundalini energy that had flowed from him into them. He also observed our health and lifestyle habits quite carefully. He was very opposed to us taking

food from outside of the ashram or loading up on sweets when we visited Bombay for any reason as such food was likely to disturb our health. If one approached him with any kind of ailment or injury one had to be brave and accept his favorite remedies, which included drinking cows' urine or peeing on a wound.

When I arrived in the ashram he wanted to know all about my previous lifestyle. I had been living a yogic lifestyle for about one year, being vegetarian and practicing the *asanas* and *shatkarmas*, cleansing practices of classical hatha yoga. One day in conversation in Amma's room he pointed out, "You must have had many boyfriends, I can see you have lost your vital fluids, your cheeks are sunken and your skin pallid." This was quite embarrassing to say the least, but I was a product of the sexual revolution of the late sixties in California!

"This girl has had eighty boyfriends," he said, pointing to another American woman from New York who was working nearby. "You will get your radiance back soon living here with this pure environment, pure food, maintaining celibacy, and chanting and meditating."

He seemed to be quite fascinated by the histories of the western girls who came there, as sexual freedom was not at all an acceptable behavior in India at that time. Women's purity was protected and preserved until the time of marriage. At that time in India, unfortunately, western women were portrayed in Indian films as being extremely promiscuous to the point of being depicted as sexual predators. It's no wonder that western women found themselves the target of sexual harassment when they traveled through India. But then they themselves were not conscious to observe the modest dress codes that were observed by Indian women. In their hot pants and halter tops, they led men to feel they were just asking for sex and [the men] were more than eager to oblige. This dichotomy between cultural attitudes towards sexual behavior provoked many misunderstandings in interactions between western women and men, including some of the spiritual teachers.³

As part of the emphasis on discipline and health, Baba very much emphasized the preservation of sexual energy as being the fuel for spiritual practice. It was not a question of morality generally in spite of the different cultural attitudes. In the same way that he emphasized purity in vegetarian food for the effects it had on the energies of the body and mind, he emphasized preservation of sexual fluids as essential for developing the subtle strength necessary for the more refined practices of yoga and meditation.

We were encouraged to read various texts that had been translated into English. One particularly interesting one was *Devatma Shakti*, which described the subtle and intricate process whereby the sexual fluids of a meditator are refined through pure diet, yogic lifestyle, pranayama and meditation practices. In the case of the Siddha yogis such as Baba and his Guru, who were described as *urdhvaretas*,⁴ that fluid became a conscious dynamic force that was able to be controlled by concentration and will as a vehicle for the transmission of Kundalini energy, known as shaktipat. That transmission could be given in the form of a physical touch; a word, usually a mantra whispered in the ear; or a look, whereby the force of the energy radiated out of the eyes of the master into the eyes of the ready disciple.

Baba was invited to tour the world again in 1974, invited by Werner Erhard to participate in a series of EST Presents seminars. I left earlier from India to assist with preparations and met him and his party when he arrived in Oakland. I had some trepidations about this tour, as I knew that Ganeshpuri ashram would never be the same pristine sanctuary of meditation once people met Baba and received the spiritual awakening that was so uniquely his work. I also wondered in my mind how people would understand what kind of yogi he was and what he was doing when he gave shaktipat, with such vastly different cultural conditioning.

Part Two: The Meditation Revolution

His visit seemed to correspond with a burgeoning area of research into the field of “consciousness”. Baba was recognized by many influential people in areas of science, psychology and physics as a realized master yogi of an exceptional and rare level. Each day there were lines of people coming to meet him for private meetings. Actually, [they were] not private; there would be a group of people scheduled for each morning or afternoon session, and they would discuss their concerns or interests in the company of another 10-15 people.⁵ These groups were always very lively as they included well known personalities such as Alan Ginsberg, Carlos Castaneda, Werner Erhardt, politicians, film personalities, journalists, astronauts, and physicists. Each session was filled with dynamic interactions where Baba was influential in his efforts to get the individuals to turn within for their own experience of higher reality. Whatever people came to him with professional curiosity, or personal dissatisfaction in their lives, it was clear that Baba had one agenda: to facilitate a direct awakening of the higher consciousness within each individual.

The scientists came with their kirilian cameras, and various high-tech equipment in an effort to somehow measure or gauge Baba's heightened level of spiritual energy. He would always have a good joke with them saying, "Ultimately, these instruments are created by the human mind, and beyond that mind is the supreme universal consciousness. You should try to discover that directly."

Initially, when Baba undertook this Second World Tour, he was simply responding to the requests and invitations that came to him. He told reporters who enquired that he planned to be there about a year and then return to India. But he began to see the level of interest in spiritual awakening, alongside a very pervasive sense of dissatisfaction that people expressed about their lives. To his surprise, it seemed, in the America that he was observing, no matter how wealthy, how successful or how famous the people were, somehow genuine happiness was eluding them. As he listened to the tales of unhappiness, or lack of self-worth, and general sense of despair expressed by the people who came to meet him, he began to emphasize the practice of meditation as a source of extraordinary limitless happiness and fulfillment in life. He described meditation as being universal, like sleep— one did not need to hold any particular religious belief; [one] simply [needed] to discover their own innate consciousness or (as it was translated) the higher Self. As he responded to the needs of the people, his Meditation Revolution began to take shape.

After spending time in Oakland and Los Angeles, we set off on a tour across the USA via Route 66. It was Baba's Meditation Revolution on the road. We had several cars, a school bus which carried all the recording equipment, cooking pots and a pickup towing Baba's Kitchen in a small trailer. Baba was extremely particular about his own diet and it was essential that wherever he went he could control his food to protect his own health.

Baba would often fly from one place to the next destination, and our road crew would drive all night to arrive at the next house or retreat spot, unload, unpack, prepare the hall setup, Baba's quarters, kitchen, and then be bright and with faces shining with joy to greet Baba as he arrived. From that time onward, our role was to assist him with his work, to offer service so that others could experience their own inner awakening.

Baba did several of the EST Present seminars which were usually packed with up to a thousand students. As Baba and his translator and organizers began to interact more with Werner's students they came up with the idea to hold meditation Intensives in which Baba could teach and transmit meditation via shaktipat to

people on a large scale. These began to be scheduled across the country, with the first Intensive held in Aspen. The program included sessions of chanting *Om Namah Shivaya*, the initiation mantra that Baba gave to people on a printed card, talks by Baba about various aspects of yogic lifestyle and an experience talk by someone who had had a profound inner awakening.

During the meditation sessions Baba began to go around the room with a wand of peacock feathers and hit people on the head, tweak them above the nose, or gently kick them at the base of the spine. Sometimes the room would erupt with sounds of laughter, weeping, or rapid breathing. Clearly the awakening of the inner energy was occurring in many of the participants. Later during sharing sessions people would describe extraordinary experiences of energy moving through their bodies, spontaneous movements, feelings of ecstasy or supernatural joy. This introduction of shaktipat on a mass scale was a very radical departure from the way it was classically given and the way in which Baba himself had always given it. Some years later he described this to some center leaders:

“I could not give shaktipat to so many people without the grace of my Guru. I never gave shaktipat like this in India. The people from India are wondering how I am doing this, and some of them are even coming to receive it in these intensives. Previously I would ask people to do austerities in the ashram for at least one year and ask them to purify themselves for a long time, before I could give the touch of shaktipat to them. That is the way it should be done. Otherwise all of their negative karmas come into me. At the time of shaktipat the sins of the seeker are burnt and at the same time all those negative effects come to me. I have to meditate and through the process of meditation I am able to burn up those negative karmas.”

Working closely with Baba during these events, we could see him come out of the meditation hall. Sometimes he would say, “My whole body pains from giving shaktipat to so many people. Still I will feel the effects for maybe one day, with some fever, and [I’ll] just rest and do my *japa* and meditation and it will go away.” This was said with his characteristic joy and good humour. Clearly this work of bringing about the awakening of so many people was a source of great joy for him, despite whatever ill effects there were on his body.

These events went on as we traveled across the southern US, through New Mexico, Colorado, Georgia, and finally ended up in New York City. An old school was rented on the upper West Side as temporary accommodation for our mobile Ashram. There we stayed for some time with daily programs of Guru Gita,

chanting, seva, and the never-ending stream of visitors. Somehow the energy in Manhattan and the people seemed to be particularly heavy as we held several Intensives on the premises. I recall that at the time Baba was affected severely after the Intensives and [he] undertook a fast for some days, along with his unflagging daily meditation and practice routine, to restore his health and vitality.

An old hotel was purchased in Oakland that was to be renovated as the first American ashram. It was in a rough part of town and had been a derelict hotel filled with drug addicts and prostitutes. A dedicated crew of workers worked for months to refurbish it into a sparkling clean ashram premises fit for Baba's arrival. I had gone there early after the purchase to assist with preparations, but I was not able to stay there more than one night. I had dreadful nightmares of violence and horrific pains in my body throughout the night as I was affected by the vibrations of the place. But after the renovation work, painting, and a lot of chanting, the new Oakland Ashram had a sparkling, clean atmosphere and was suitable as an ashram. The whole process reminded me of what happens to us during the process of spiritual practice, we come with lots of scars and bruises from our mishaps in life, or wrong choices and actions, and the Guru goes to work with his crew of skillful practices: chanting, meditation, pure food, preservation of the vital energies, and one comes out sparkling clean and able to live a good, wholesome, useful life.

During the time in Oakland Baba continued meeting many distinguished visitors and maintained friendships and dialogues with interesting characters. One such was a psychologist who was a regular visitor and had many extraordinary experiences in his time meditating with Baba.

In one conversation with him Baba told him, "Only after coming to America I started touching people. Before that, my Guru Nityananda Baba was very severe. Shaktipat was given only in a certain way. The person receiving [it] had to have a bath, be pure, done much tapasya and austerities. Then only was shaktipat given. And before my Baba, Gurus were very strict about whom they would accept food from. But my Baba used to tell us, 'Now you should not discriminate between caste and creed and if anyone prepares food with purity and a good heart, then you can eat it.'

"Shaktipat Diksha was also given in a certain way, behind closed doors in solitude, and the Guru would touch the disciple in certain places while reciting mantras. Often the Guru would touch the base of the spine at the area of the sexual organs as a way of awaking the Kundalini energy.

“Though I am quite an old man, because of the retention of the sexual fluid inside the body I feel tremendous youth inside. In fact, I feel like a child inside. I get up at 3:00 am, and tonight because there is a lecture I won’t be returning until after midnight. And it is because of this sexual fluid that you have any vigor, energy, or radiance. So, one should conserve that. Just as you like to lay by your savings in the bank, likewise you should save your sexual fluid.”

Psychologist: “Isn’t it true that the body ejects sexual fluid every so often, to clean itself?”

Baba: “No the body won’t eject it. A yogi’s body will digest it, assimilate it. The body ejects it through a dream when we have violated dietary or lifestyle rules. If you overeat, the body will generate more sexual fluid than it needs, and the body will eject the fluids. But a meditator has to go further. The sexual fluid not only needs to be conserved, but it should be moved upwards through meditation, whereas in ordinary life it moves downwards. Through meditation it flows upwards. You can feel it move upwards and it goes into the cerebral center. From there it purifies the nerves, and this process become more and more subtle. This is the source of great joy for a meditator. I’m not saying you should not have children. All I am saying is that you should value the sexual fluid and you shouldn’t waste it. You should be aware of its great value for health and spiritual development.”

Psychologist: “Can you say something about the fear of death that all of us have at some time or another or perhaps as we grow older it becomes more intense.”

Baba: “As you move closer and closer to your inner Self through meditation, the fear of death loses its hold over you progressively. Why should you fear death when death is inevitable? If something is inevitable there is no point in fearing it. Anyone who is a pure and noble soul will be able to die peacefully; he doesn’t feel the slightest pain or hardship at the time of death. It is the fear of death which results in agony at the time of death; if you meditate that fear will dissipate.”

Psychologist: “Could you say something about your belief in after life or reincarnation?”

Baba: “Yes, birth is followed by death and death is followed by rebirth. One who is born is bound to die, and one who dies is bound to be reborn and this cycle goes on until one can become liberated from it through the grace of God. A good

meditator is able to see the world of the departed and the world where he will go after his death.”

A reporter also questioned Baba on his feelings about death. Q: “Do you feel as much joy in contemplating your passage from this life as you feel in your life?”

Baba: “Once you experience the inner bliss of meditation it fills you completely. Just as when you cry and lament you feel great agony and pain inside; when there is an upsurge of bliss within you feel intoxicated on it and still this bliss is not just a brief episode, it stays with you continually and it also lasts as you leave your body. Contemplation of leaving this body is as joyful as anything else and in fact the essence of yoga is not physical exercises; the essence of yoga is conscious death. Real yoga is to experience your own death directly through meditation while you are still alive. Through this genuine yoga your sense of individuality dies and the self, the innate consciousness, survives.

“In meditation you can look at your own death with a serene mind. When a saint dies, he dies laughing. There is a photo of a great saint who was like a Guru to me (Zipruanna). He sent me to my guru. He wandered around naked everywhere, but he was a perfect celibate. We call such a being *urdhvareta*, one whose sexual fluid moves upward, not downward. He had unusual powers, If any time I would set out to visit him he would tell people around him that this boy is coming to see me. His behavior was quite strange; in this country if you were to see him you might lock him up in a mental hospital. I will describe to you how he died. There was a woman in his village who was a teacher. He would occasionally go to her place to have coffee. One morning he landed at her place around 10:00 am and said, ‘I must have a bath.’ This surprised the teacher and her family very much, but they felt delight that they were blessed with this opportunity to give this holy man a bath. Such an opportunity is cherished in our country. He had a bath, then he asked the woman to cook some noodles for him, she did so and offered it to him. He ate it, and then he said, “Zipru is leaving, you can cry to your hearts’ content.” He made a certain sound and then he passed away.

“What is the use of practicing yoga if it doesn’t give you power over your own death? Before you see the highest truth in meditation, you must see your own death. That can be a terrifying experience. But after you have survived that experience though the inner transformation of meditation, death loses its sting. Then it is nothing more than deep sleep. In the *Yoga Vashishta*, which is a great philosophical work, death is described as a profound sleep.”

Psychologist: “I have read in some philosophies that there is a world where people go after death, a kind of mental world and they are in the same state in this world, but without a body. They exist in the mind and have to overcome the craving and desires that they had in the body.”

Baba: “What happens is that you leave the body in the same casual body in which you enjoy profound sleep when you are alive, and after your death you pass into a definite world which is the world of the dead or the ancestors. Just as a seed contains the whole tree in a potential form, when the soul leaves a physical body it carries all its desires and attachments in the seed form and they don’t disappear. When one is reborn the impressions of those desires, karmas and attachments are carried forth into the next life.”

Q: “Does the mind review the life it has had?”

Baba: “For quite a while after death one remains in a state of unconsciousness and then the spirit wakes up and passes into the world of ancestors or the dead and then once it surveys its past life, and that memory seems to fade away and just a part of it remains, and then it is in that world where it is decided where the consciousness is going to be born next. There is a central nerve in this body and it is there that the Kundalini Shakti resides and there you also have the impressions of your past lives. When you are reborn those impressions are still there in a subtle form and once your inner Shakti is awakened during meditation, it is possible to see your past seven lives very clearly. I have seen that.

“There is a certain fort in a part of Maharashtra state that I used to visit in my younger days and whenever I went there I felt a strange fascination for it. I would start crying and that fort would draw me over again and again and I used to wonder why I had such a strong attachment for it, and it was after I saw my past life in meditation that I saw that once in my past life I was a king and lived in that fort. However, after full knowledge awakens within, then you don’t feel attachment for any of your past lives. Now I don’t feel any attachment for that fort. The science of Kundalini is a great science, it is a great yoga. Most people don’t understand it.”

Part Three: Illness Strikes – Oakland, 1975

During his stay at the new Oakland Ashram in late July of 1975 Baba underwent his first major health challenge. During the night he began to have a series of powerful seizures. His attendants later said they were terrified themselves as they had never seen Baba in such a condition and they did not know what was

happening. As he was undergoing these terrible convulsions he was quietly and calmly directing them on what to do, and who to call.

“Don’t be frightened. I am just experiencing the fruits of my own karmas....” he said, reassuring them.

Baba was taken to the hospital where he remained for some time. It seemed his blood sugar levels had gotten seriously out of balance and the seizures were connected to his diabetes. All over the world devotees began to express their concern and devotion with ongoing *Guru Gita* chanting. The doctors were intent upon Baba taking complete rest and restricted visitors. But soon Baba was himself calling people on the telephone and telling them to come see him at the hospital. The waiting room on that floor turned into a kind of reception room as people came with gifts of flowers and fruit. Clearly the hospital staff, doctors and nurses had never seen such a patient who generated such an atmosphere of caring for all around him.

He described his experiences to one visitor: “My Guru’s grace is great, and I feel that the sickness has left me now. As soon as I was admitted they gave me an injection (IV) and the strokes stopped. During this time, I have had a real test of my inner state, and now I am happy. As these seizures were coming my attendants had to hold me down. The photo of my Baba was in front and I kept looking at the pictures with love and smiling. My attendant said, ‘How is it that you are smiling and laughing?’ I said, ‘Should I cry or weep? This is my destiny— what should I do?’ “

He went on: “It’s not a great thing to experience such a disease but the real test is to endure it. There is not even a single saint who was not affected by some disease or another in the last phase of his life. My Baba had something similar, I saw many Siddhas with illness in their later years. Ramakrishna Paramahansa had cancer during his last years. Because of this condition, I have not lost any of my spiritual strength. I am very happy because I have realized that Guru’s grace can nullify the effects of our *parabdha karma* ⁶ and make it meaningless.

“After all of this trouble, I feel quite happy and joyful. Perhaps this sickness is the result of giving shaktipat to so many people in such a mass scale.”

At the retreat in Arcata, that had begun even without Baba being there, Malti told a story that was to be repeated numerous times in the coming years:

“There was a seeker by the name of Ramanuja. He received the mantra from his Guru and the Guru told him he must not reveal it or tell it to anyone. He asked the

Guru, ‘What will happen to me if I do?’ The Guru replied, ‘You will go to hell.’ ‘And what will happen to the people who receive it?’, Ramanuja enquired. ‘They will go to heaven,’ was the Guru’s reply. With the greatest of intentions, Ramanuja went to the rooftop and shouted the mantra out so that all who heard it could go to heaven. ‘What does it matter if one man goes to hell for the sake of thousands of people?’ he would ask those around him.”

As Baba was speaking to his friend the Psychologist, a very lovely young woman with a bandaged head came into the room. Baba told his visitors, “The doctors used to come to me and say she was going to die. But I told them, ‘She will not die’, then I gave her the mantra and told her, ‘even if you are going to die, it is all right. At least repeat this mantra; it will protect you.’ Now she is all right.” The girl obviously had great love for Baba.

Other relatives of patients came in and asked for Baba’s blessings for their loved ones. Daily Baba made the rounds of the floor of the hospital, greeting and befriending the patients and their families. Nurses, laboratory technicians, as well as old devotees, were collecting outside of Baba’s room to experience Baba’s loving grace, even at such a time. One girl came and offered to pay Baba’s hospital bill. Baba patted her affectionately and told her, “Don’t cry now, I am quite all right. You have such a generous heart; you have offered to pay my hospital bill. Werner and others have also offered. I am thinking about it.”

I went to visit him at the hospital. After waiting outside, my turn came to go in to pay my respects. I bowed at the side of the bed where he was sitting upright greeting visitors. “Poor Baba”, was in my mind, “he’s sick.” I felt a tugging of my hair as he pulled me up to his level and looked me intently in the eyes. Powerful rays of light shone from his eyes which entered into my eyes and immediately flooded my heart. I was a little dazed as I staggered out of the room. The idea ‘poor Baba’ I realized came from my own ignorance, clearly his inner power and vast heart were untouched by the travails of his physical body. Baba was not like an ordinary person who succumbed to fear and lamentation about his body and health.

He went on to describe the situation to his visitors, “For yogis this is our test. As the strokes were occurring I never once asked my Baba, ‘Save me. Save me.’ I kept looking at his picture. Now I am completely cured, I feel like a newly born young man and I will be able to do a lot more work than before. I can walk around the hospital and I am just waiting for the doctors to tell me I can go home so that I can be with everyone.”

After Baba was released from the hospital he rested in his room waiting to be able to join his devotees at a month-long retreat that had already started in Arcata, [California]. Chatting with some people over the next few days he related his experiences of his illness. “The nurses used to come and ask me, ‘Aren’t you in pain?’ I said, ‘I don’t feel it.’ They said they had never seen such a patient in the hospital; some of the doctors and nurses came and asked to receive a mantra card from me. “There is great joy in the inner Self. Once established in that joy you won’t feel any pain, there is no suffering in this world. Whatever suffering you might have, you won’t feel it.”

Speaking with a group who had come from Atlanta he said, “There is no greater temple than the heart. There is no greater God than your inner Self. If you know just that...that’s enough. Be peaceful, no matter where you are. Do your work, live your life. You can’t depend on the body, you never know what will happen at what time to your body. You will never know what illness you will go through. I had such a strong body, but still this happened. But I have recovered very well, and there is no lingering effect of any disease because I had the grace of my Guru and he saved me. All the time constantly repeat Guru Om, Guru Om, don’t trust the future; you never know what will come after the next moment. Believe in the present moment which you are living in now and remember God, he is right inside of you. If you do this much, remembering Him every moment, it doesn’t matter where you are or what happens to you. Just live your life, do your work and be happy.”

He gave darshan from his bedroom window to the ashramites who assembled in the courtyard below. “The doctor keeps calling and telling me, ‘Don’t talk to people too much and don’t walk too much.’ I’m very well and very peaceful. Those seizures benefited me a lot...all the time my mind remained very quiet and all the unsteadiness of the mind has disappeared. No matter where I sit, I pass into meditation, and if I am around other people in that state, it will be good for them, too.

“You people have given me so much love. You chanted a lot, chanted *Guru Gita* only for my sake. The doctors keep calling to check with my people, ‘Is he listening to us? Is he talking less? Is he getting good sleep?’”

Baba went on to the Arcata retreat in time for the anniversary of his initiation from his Guru, August 15th. “Still I do not have the permission of the doctors to speak, I was told to wait until the last two days of the retreat. What is the guarantee the body will last, what is the guarantee that I will be able to give you a talk later on.”

After Baba recovered more fully, he resumed his work of meeting people, and actively giving shaktipat in Intensives. The demand from people seemed to be endless. The numbers of people in the Intensives increased to several hundred people and he continued to touch each and every one with his boundless compassion, disregarding the effects on his personal health.

Part Four: Return To India, 1976

When Baba returned to India, the ashram had been enlarged to make space for the many people who would come there to spend time, participate in the Intensives, *yagnas*, chants and many activities that Baba officiated over.

In March 1977 Baba began to experience heart problems, severe angina pains. He was admitted to Nanavati Hospital in Mumbai. From there he sent messages to the ashramites in Ganeshpuri and all over the world. In Ganeshpuri a continuous *Guru Gita* Chant went on for two weeks. Through the medicine of chanting, the anxiety and concern of the devotees was transformed into one-pointed focus on him, and a deeper recognition that even he was not immune from the inevitable flow of nature.

Baba recorded a video from his hospital bed. He appeared smiling, soft and gentle. “People must be worrying what has happened to Baba. I am completely all right. You needn’t worry about me. Disease has come to the disease, not to me. “Birth and death follow everyone, you and me. Therefore, a sensible person should not worry about birth and death at all. This is not a disease, it is an experience. All over the world devotees offer flowers to my photo and read the *Guru Gita* for my sake. When they are doing this for me, what can I do? I have to experience their devotion. In the same way, I have to experience this.

“Stop worrying about my body. Instead, think about the path I have shown you. Just as you have a mundane passport, you also have a spiritual passport. When that passport expires you have to leave. Krishna said in the Bhagavad Gita, ‘Death is inevitable for a person who has taken birth, and birth is inevitable for a person who has died.’ Therefore, why worry? Now forget about my pain. I am very happy that you have chanted the *Guru Gita* so much for my sake. Perhaps I should get some small pain every now and then, just so you will chant the *Guru Gita* and be so focused.

“I am coming back to the West soon, but it may take some time. Now that I am in India I have to do some work here also. I am grateful for all your compassion and

love. There is great love between Guru and disciple; you have shown so much love to me. You perform so much practice for me, and there is nothing I can do for you. All I can say is that I love you so much. You have given so much to me, the hardship of your bodies, your wealth, your work; you have given everything to me. I don't have anything to give to you. All that I can give in return is to say, I love you, I love you, I love you."

Sometime later he gave a darshan to people who gathered on the lawns of the hospital. He sat at his window for about 10 minutes and people were happy to see him looking so well and joyful. The doctors tested Baba after the darshan to determine the effects of the darshan. They found that his condition improved and encouraged him to schedule another gathering the following week. Baba called for the ashramites to come from Ganeshpuri. On the following Sunday afternoon six busloads of devotees came from the ashram. Since it was three weeks since Baba had been away from the Ashram, they were eagerly looking forward to seeing Baba.

The group arrived at the hospital and sat quietly on the lawn chanting Om Namah Shivaya. Taxis and busloads of Bombay devotees arrived until the crowd grew to about one thousand. When Baba came to the window he raised both hands in greeting to the shouts of "Sat Gurunath Maharaj ki Jaya". The devotees were thrilled to see he appeared as joyful as ever. He waved to people he saw in the crowd and threw garlands of fragrant mogra into the crowds. Baba sat for a half an hour. There was a television news team from Bombay there shooting him and the crowd. The hospital director came forward and placed a garland around Baba's neck. There was no doubt that Baba was in his usual humor. He called for his dog, Captain, to come forward and he dropped balloons for him as he had been doing in the ashram courtyard. Captain leaped through the crowds to burst the balloons. Baba called out that he would return soon, and then called out, "I love you, I love you, I love you." The devotees called back, "We love you Baba".

Baba left the hospital, but the doctors insisted that he spend some time resting before returning to the Ashram. A large house was made available on Juhu Beach. The setting was idyllic; a spacious lawn bordered with colorful flowers and bougainvilleas stretched down to the beach. Towering palm trees swayed in the refreshing breeze from the ocean.

During the days Baba would rest, sitting on the beach in the early morning hours and again after sunset. After a couple of days rest, knowing that the devotees were pining for his darshan, Baba called for a silent public darshan every evening. The

Bombay devotees came by the hundreds and a special chartered bus carrying ashramites came from Ganeshpuri nearly every evening. The devotees would take their seats on the grass in a semi-circle facing the ocean. Baba came at six o'clock and sat comfortably on a lawn chair. No one was allowed to go up for darshan. Offerings of fruit and sweets were cut up and distributed as Prasad and fragrant flowers were distributed amongst the ladies. Many well-known musicians and singers such as Surendra Rao, Mahendra Kapoor, and Aziz Naza came to serenade Gurudev and his devotees.

Baba enjoyed the music and often hummed to himself or laughed at the lyrics. The devotional music, the golden hues of the setting sun, and the refreshing ocean breeze provided an exquisite setting for Baba as he sat absorbed in his inner being. Observing his stillness, one's mind also became still.

He had been telling the devotees since the onset of his illness, "I am in bliss. The disease may be there, but I am not affected by it. You should be in bliss also." There was no trace of illness in Baba's countenance. On the contrary, as he sat quietly, his inner state radiated more powerfully than ever. Many devotees remarked that they had never seen Baba looking more glorious, more radiant. Observing Baba at Juhu one could clearly understand that he had, in fact, transcended the limitations of the body. He was obviously dwelling in his inner being and radiating that for all who came and silently partook of his darshan. In the early morning hours Baba came out to sit on the beach, enjoying the fresh, cool breeze. Devotees living in the area came to know of it, as well as some ashramites who had come to stay at the beach during Baba's stay. For a few mornings Baba sat silently with the devotees as the sun rose. After a couple of days Baba suggested that we sing the *Guru Gita*. Devotees began to line up on the beach as early as 5 a.m. meditating and awaiting Baba's arrival. Baba sat quietly during the recitation, and occasionally motioned for changes in the pace or speed. One morning, reflecting on the beauty of the ocean, he told the devotees, "The scriptures say that the holy waters are the body of God. Here we are sitting on the body of God, singing about God. This chanting purifies the heart and all the *nadis*."

As the birthday celebrations grew nearer, Baba seemed to grow stronger, and he insisted that he should return to the ashram to officiate over the *Maha Rudra Yagna* and the *sanyasa* initiation being held for some of his older students. He promised the doctors that he would continue to rest and would not meet people, but he would not be absent for the celebrations in the Ashram.

During the evening darshan two nights before he was to depart from Bombay he called for the microphone and began to speak to the crowd. “The doctors have forbidden me to talk, so this talk is illegal, and when you do something illegal, you have to pay the penalty. The doctors in America warned me that if I didn’t take rest there would be some problems and this illness came because I broke the rules. “There is a word in the Bhagavad Gita called *dana*, which means charity, generous giving of gifts. In the *Gita* the Lord says, ‘By giving in charity to the deserving, all sorts of diseases disappear. Dana purifies all sorts of sins also. *Dana* is the staircase to heaven.’

“When I was in Nanavati hospital many heart specialists came to examine me, and prescribed treatment, without charging any fees. It was all done as charity, with good will. I welcome them all heartily. When I was discharged from the hospital the lady who owns this house gave the whole house for my use and shifted to a hotel. How kind of her.

“Nature herself has given everything to us generously, If Mother Earth did not give us all the food grains, what would we eat? If the air didn’t blow, how could we survive without oxygen? If the Lord of fire was not working within us, how could we digest our food? That is why generous giving is the most honorable deed that a man can perform.

“Sheik Nasrudin was a perfect miser. He was so miserly that his wife got absolutely fed up with his stinginess. One day a great lecturer came to their village. A sign was posted announcing he would give a discourse on charity. Nasrudin’s wife was very happy to see that notice. She insisted that Nasrudin attend the discourse and actually took him there. The speaker talked about charity, and the importance of generosity. He stated, ‘Everyone, this Earth, the ocean and the five elements God and those who have realized God are all sustained by charity. There is no greater deed than *dana*.’ Nasrudin listened to the lecture patiently. When it was over he told his wife, ‘You were so kind to take me to this lecture. I have learned a very good lesson today. How important charity is. From tomorrow I will start begging for alms.’ His wife was aghast. She said, ‘Oh my God, this man is really impossible, I brought him here to learn the importance of giving generously, and he is speaking only of taking from people.’

“This is not charity; charity is when a man works hard for himself and after taking care of his own needs, he gives generously to others. Man should always have a generous heart. And he must not forget that God has been showing his bountiful grace on him all the time.

“When I was in the United States I met many scientists, who had studied all the sciences, and some had even been to the moon, but now they are investigating consciousness. Similarly, you must investigate God. God is not against your worldly life, He has created this beautiful world for His own convenience, for His own sport. What I want to impress on you is just as you decorate yourself, your wife and family, you should worship and decorate the Lord who dwells in your heart. Just love God as much as you do your wife, your children, your car; and then material life and spiritual life will go hand in hand.

“I want to welcome and thank those *lakhs* (thousands) of people who recited *Guru Gita* for my recovery. Many people also made lots of offerings and sacrifices to God for my recovery. They must have done it with great sincerity since I have recovered from this illness very quickly. This should have lasted six months, but by people’s good wishes, it has finished in one month.

“You should always remember that the universal consciousness which God has given is the greatest gift given to you. Don’t deceive yourself in that respect. God has given the greatest gift of all. Don’t forget that. God has given us everything. We must also do something in return. People wonder, ‘How to love God?’ He is residing in every being, so to see Him in every individual is the real worship of God, real meditation, real dharma.

“People recited the *Guru Gita* day and night for my early recovery. God has made their prayers very fruitful, so I have recovered within a month. I welcome you all.” Baba returned to the ashram after having first gone to Ganeshpuri for darshan of Bade Baba. He was greeted by his elephant Viju at the gate who garlanded him with flowers, and girls waving arati trays. He walked through the courtyard and sat down. He spoke briefly: “I left the ashram with sickness, but I have come back without it. I know for certain that my rapid recovery has not been due to the doctor’s treatment, but because of so many people reciting the *Guru Gita* with best wishes for me.

“No one is free from the play of destiny; that is why the Lord has said, ‘Mysterious are the ways of karma.’ It is said that Lord Rama was Lord of the world; still he was exiled to the forest. It is said that Lord Krishna was Lord of this world, still he had to wander from Gokhul to Mathura and from Mathura to Dwarka. They were powerful beings, yet they had to undergo their destiny. This shows how inscrutable are the ways of karma. Swami Ramakrishna was a great being; still he was afflicted with cancer.

Nityananda was a born Siddha; he was even called an incarnation, still he had arthritis in his knees. So, I also had this heart trouble. But the doctors have praised me saying that usually such patients go away for six months, and I have returned after one month.

“It is through the power of the Self that I am happy. The disease may be there, but I remain beyond it. You should always remember your purpose in coming to the Ashram. Here you should be absorbed only in sadhana, in Guruseva, and devotion for the Guru. Then you will get something, you won’t go away empty handed. I bless you all.”

Part Five: Heart Attack, 1977

Baba had been saying that it was important that he attend the birthday celebrations; no matter what the cost, he had to be there. His presence was vital for the success of the yajna and the yajna had important consequences for his future work. On the morning of his birthday [celebration], May 3rd, 1977, Baba warned his doctors and nurse that this was going to be a very bad day for him. Before he left for the yajna he warned them to have injections and pills ready.

“It was the most tense hour of my life,” Dr. Thakkur said later, describing some of the important episodes in Baba’s illness. “First, he told me that I should watch him carefully, that anything could happen. But then he made me sit up on the yajna platform with my wife and participate in the yajna! This is what a Siddha is like. I have never been so scared! All the time I was sitting there I was listening, afraid that at any moment Baba might collapse.”

Typically, Baba had turned his own crisis into an occasion for one of his devotees to do intense sadhana. Moreover, even though many of the devotees had heard the news that Baba was in danger, we all noticed how good he looked, how strong his voice was, how perfectly he performed all the ceremonies connected with the yajna, even when they involved physical exertion.

“He wouldn’t let us take a cardiogram that morning,” Dr. Thakkur said; “I think it was because he knew that if he let us see what was really going on we would have insisted that he rest. That evening he had some pain. The next morning, at 6:15, we went in to take his pulse and found that it was double the normal rate. The cardiogram showed that he was having a major heart attack.

“But the most serious part of the attack came later in the afternoon when all of a sudden Baba’s heart beat slowed down to almost nothing. He remained in that state for 15 minutes, and for a while the doctors actually thought we had lost him. Then, quite suddenly Baba opened his eyes and came back to normal consciousness. He looked at us and said, “What are you doing? I went to see my Baba and he told me it is not time for me to go yet. Now go eat your lunch. “Since then, except for minor complications his heart beat has been stable. After the morning episode, two eminent doctors were called from Bombay. They came immediately, and have been here ever since, on call for Baba whenever he should need them. Sophisticated heart care machines have also been made available for him.

“Baba really is controlling everything,” Dr. Thakkur said. “He always knows in advance when there will be trouble, and he lets us know what the bad times will be. Today he told us that there would be a minor complication, and there was. But it was definitely minor, and easily controlled. My opinion is that Baba has arranged his heart attack for himself. He said a few weeks ago that if he had one full heart attack, that would be the end of the angina pain. It has happened just like that for the last two nights, he has had pain-free sleep for the first time since all this began in February.

“Don’t think that I am taking care of Baba. Baba is taking care of me. For ten days Noni and I sat up all night in the Nanavati hospital watching the screen of the cardiogram machine. I should have been tired, but I had more energy than I’ve ever had, and people said they never saw me looking so good. I used to sit there watching the lines on the machine and feeling so much joy. Once Noni said, ‘You must be repeating your mantra in rhythm to the lines.’ I said, ‘No, I’m not repeating it, it’s going on automatically.’”

Even in his critical condition Baba continued to give instructions about the business of the Ashram. Moreover, one of his doctors said that sometimes he looks at Baba as he lies on his bed and sees that Baba keeps making gestures of blessing. It seems to him that at those times Baba is feeling the anxiety and concern of his devotees, and that he is reassuring them that really, everything is going to be fine

Part Six: Third World Tour 1980

In spite of his health problems in India, Baba undertook a Third World Tour. Because of his weakened health, there were now many people to assist with his work. There were managers to work in the different ashrams around the world, and

Swamis had been initiated and trained to teach and run Intensives and courses. Baba's major work was to meet people and to continue to give shaktipat on a very large scale. During his visit to Miami, he had some heart problems and the doctors did surgery and put in a pacemaker to assist his heart in functioning.

When we were in Los Angeles for several months, word began spreading that Baba was having sexual encounters with some of the young women students. Several long-term students were leaving the ashram with stories about hypocrisy, and breakage of vows of celibacy. At one point I mentioned to Amma, Swami Prajnananda, with whom I was working closely, [some news about] what was happening and [what was] being said. She relayed this information to Baba, and within a short time he called me into his room for a discussion.

"What are people saying?" he asked. I replied that people were saying that he was not a true celibate, though he advocated celibacy for his students but was behaving differently. There was particular concern as some of the girls in question were very young.

Baba said three things in quick succession. Each statement was like a short pithy sutra, which required a lot of commentary to become clear, or like koans which a seeker had to investigate repeatedly, using the information given to knock against the rigidity and hardness in the mind, until there was some softening of limited conceptual ideas and consequential breakthrough of genuine understanding on the highest level.

Those three statements were:

- 1) "Would I be able to give Shaktipat if I were having sex with those girls?"
- 2) "Siddha Swatantra Bhavaha (simply translated as 'a Siddha behaves with a freedom that is beyond normal expectation')", and
- 3) "A snake charmer is not afraid of a snake".

After those statements, to which I made very little response at the time, I was dismissed from his room.

Those statements have been a good platform for my probing [his] behaviors that from an ordinary perspective were disturbing and have sadly brought great discredit to Baba's name via internet posting. My interpretation of them at this time is:

1) *Would I be able to give shaktipat if I was having sex with those girls?*

According to the texts it would not be possible to transmit a powerful shaktipat that gave an experience of the highest truth if the sexual fluid of a yogi was not flowing upward. This was a complicated matter, required suspension of limited understanding and an in-depth understanding of the subtleties of higher yoga tantra.

After we received sannyas initiation in 1980, Baba had a meeting with our group of newly initiated swamis and gave us instruction on how to give shaktipat. We were to be sent out to different parts of the world to do his work, giving intensives and giving shaktipat to people in that context. As he was showing us technically where and how to touch people for the best benefit, he also said, *"You must be very careful. If your practice is not strong enough, the bad karmas of the people you give shaktipat to will come in to you...and that will destroy you."*

That warning has stayed with me, even though I did in fact give shaktipat transmission as a swami in Intensives in different parts of the world over the next two years. Each time I would pray intensely to him that I was just a conduit of his grace and feel distinctly that it was his energy flowing through me.

After his death, I did not consider for a moment that it was appropriate to give shaktipat. Over the years, however, I have observed a couple of students who did give shaktipat as a feature of their work as meditation teachers. They seemed to be imitating Baba, yet in close examination it was clear that their motivation was in fact not altruistic. There seemed to be a great deal of self-serving intention accompanied by very little genuine practice. Two of those men I observed came down with very mysterious ailments that debilitated them, and [from which] they have been unable to recover. I doubt that they had received that warning from Baba, or if they had, they chose to ignore it. And who can say if their ailments were a result of giving shaktipat without sincere intent or practice. The ways of karma are mysterious...yet unfailing.

After the traumatic and divisive events that occurred in the Siddha Yoga community in 1985, I chose to disrobe and depart the unfolding chaos and fanatical behavior that had swept through the various ashrams, including the one in Sydney I had been directing for six years. I was also personally subjected to harassment for my support of Swami Nityananda.

Confronting my own Guru brothers and sisters and Swamis on the road to Badrinath in 1994 and feeling the force of their murderous intentions as they attempted to drive Guruji's [Swami Nityananda's] car and our buses off of the steep mountain road brought a huge reckoning into my mind and heart. If they were capable of such horrific intentions and behaviors, how could I be certain that I was immune from such extremist views? I undertook rigorous therapy and self-analysis for years following. I wanted to dissolve into anonymity and went to study within a Tibetan Buddhist community.

I also wanted to practice with Tibetan Buddhist teachers and focus on the practices that developed the heart and humanity: compassion, humility, loving kindness. I needed to know that I myself had made headway in eradicating the potential for anger, hatred and judgment within my own heart.

I spent considerable time studying and practicing in Nepal, Northern India and Bhutan over the years, choosing to ordain as a nun in Bhutan because I wanted to return to a life dedicated to sadhana and service as Baba had indicated emphatically to me that was my destiny. Naturally, because of my many years at Baba's feet, everything I took in and learned was filtered through my experience and the teachings we had received from Baba. I continually filtered out the cultural superimpositions that were meaningless to me as a Westerner and my in-depth exposure to Indian traditions and culture.

The manner in which initiation (*diksha* or transmission) is given in the Tibetan traditions acknowledges the possible negative effects that can come into the Guru giving the initiations. Students are generally required to purify themselves through extensive preliminary practices, repetitions of hundreds of thousands of mantras. They committed to doing the practice on a daily basis, as well as recite daily a prayer for the master's long life. These precautions were intended to lessen the detrimental effects such transmissions could have on the longevity and health of the Gurus.

Understanding these dynamics, I was able to have a much deeper appreciation of the demand and risk to Baba's health through his giving shaktipat on such a mass scale. By the end of his Third World Tour the numbers in the Intensives were 700-800 and each participant expected to be touched personally by Baba. Baba was 70+, [and] had had serious health conditions related to his diabetes, a massive heart attack and a pacemaker put in place in Miami. The demand on Baba's life force and physical health was enormous. There was no question of students having

purified themselves; whomever paid the price for the tiny space in the packed Intensive halls had the expectation of receiving shaktipat.

The 16th Karmapa, who had visited Baba on two occasions in India and Ann Arbor and with whom Baba had a very loving and warm relationship, was a very high-level master in the Tibetan tradition. He died in a hospital in Chicago in 1982. Prior to his death, it was reported that his body manifested symptoms of a particular life-threatening condition. The doctors would rush to try to reduce the severity of the condition and save his life, and then mysteriously the whole condition would recede. Again, shortly thereafter he would display symptoms of yet another life-threatening illness. According to the reports, this happened several times. The attending doctors and nurses were utterly mystified at this; they had never seen anything like this previously. Some of his close disciples who were attending him closely told them that His Holiness had taken on the karmas of many disciples over the years, and those conditions were manifesting themselves in his body in this manner. Yet it was also observed that the Karmapa seemed to have no concern for his own condition or welfare, but showed great concern for the attending physicians, nurses and staff. *Siddha Swatantra Bhavaha*: A Siddha is beyond the conventions of ordinary society.

Baba used to give examples of his own Guru, Bhagawan Nityananda, and of Zippruanna, and Hari Giri Baba, all of whom behaved at times in ways very difficult to understand, yet the ultimate benefit and outcome to those around them was undeniable.

In Bhutan one of the patron saints is known as Drukpa Kunley. His life stories depict repeated episodes wherein he would interact with women spontaneously, apparently having sex with them as a vehicle of blessings and transmissions. Drukpa Kunley was one of those unorthodox and subversive tantric teachers who constantly broke the rules of convention and “everyday morals” to lead his followers in a sort of shock therapy into the spiritual dimension behind the accepted and fixed rules and religious rituals.

One Bhutanese Rinpoche told a story of this particular yogi, intending to illustrate how such masters acted spontaneously for the benefit of others. He described a scene where the master was walking through a hillside village with one of his disciples. “Wait here one moment,” he said to his student. He then jumped into the window of a nearby house and had sex with a woman inside. When he returned he said to his student, “One of my disciples was about to incarnate into the body of a cow, and I had to save him.”

This story was told to us as an example of spontaneous compassionate action. However, the western women in the audience immediately erupted and said, “What about the woman? That was rape.” The teacher was very taken aback—consideration of the woman’s experience obviously had never entered his mind. I found consistently within those cultures it was simply assumed the women were quietly complicit and honored to be party to the yogi’s beneficial work. This highlights some of the deep cultural disparities that occur regarding gender inequality and sexual behaviors.

A snake charmer is not afraid of the snake.

As I was living with and often attending some of the tantric masters and Rinpoches of Tibet and Bhutan I observed much that helped me greatly in understanding the tantric influence inherent in the path Baba set forth: awakening of the inner energies of Kundalini. It is the sexual energy that is transmuted and utilized in such initiations, therefore the details about these have always been veiled in secrecy. Great potential for misunderstanding and abuse lay in these areas of tantric initiations and practice. I also began to observe common behaviors towards women that held beliefs that Western practitioners find basically abhorrent. Within most of the Asian cultures, including India, Tibet, Bhutan, Thailand, women are subservient to men; the slightest glint of equality is simply not even allowed to arise. Women are the property of the men, and thus utterly compliant.

Along with this was the prevailing belief that the vital energies of young women are essential for aging masters to help restore their flagging vitality. In the Tibetan tradition, when a master began to experience health problems, even if he was a monk, he would move outside of the monastery itself, taking a young consort. There was a firm belief that this would extend his life. In time those women became recognized as great practitioners themselves through their service to their husbands.

From observing and understanding this I was able to comprehend why Baba had begun to undertake interactions with young women close to him. Technically speaking, for an *urdvareta*, or a tantric master in the Tibetan tradition as well, there should never be emission of semen. That is what constitutes celibacy for such an adept yogi. Interactions with females for the purpose of testing or strengthening the inner transmuted energy did not equate to breaking celibacy. It was in fact how the yogis would increase their stores of the powerful transmuted energy which could then be utilized in their work.

Reports that I personally heard were that Baba did not have any kind of erection, that there was no penetration, and no emission of semen. It was repeatedly described as not sex in a normal sense. Yet for young women who may have not been previously sexually active, there was simply no other way to understand Baba's behavior with them. Had Baba been able to speak English and explain to them that he was seeing them as a living manifestation of the divine shakti, Kundalini energy that he needed to increase in his own system in order to be able to give shaktipat to others, would it have made a difference? Other girls loved every moment of their encounters with Baba as filled with love, blessings and powerful spiritual energy, again describing them as not being sex in any ordinary sense. Several told me that their own sexual energy was purified and refined as a result.

It seemed apparent to all of us ex-swamis and other close disciples of Baba that he undertook these interactions in an attempt to maintain the strength of the energy needed to meet the demands of the students who were intensely craving for spiritual awakening. He was able to maintain his levels of inner energy, through the contact with the young women, transmute that through his yogic powers and continue to give shaktipat, despite the considerable weakening of his own physical condition.

Despite any ill effects to his health, Baba continued to give shaktipat. He did so with great compassion and belief that only through inner awakening would people come to experience genuine happiness. There was no question of people undergoing any kind of preparation or purification which is known to reduce danger to the teacher's health. Whomever signed up for the Intensive received Baba's touch. There were 800 – 1,000 people in Intensives in Fallsburg the last summer.

Towards the end of the tour and the last summer in the Fallsburg ashram Baba made a shock announcement at the conclusion of his Guru Purnima address. He called Swami Nityananda forward, placed a garland around his neck and declared, "This man will be my successor." That announcement brought reverberations of surprise and recognition that Baba himself was preparing to conclude his work, and his life. As the attention of the large audience turned to Nityananda, Baba quietly walked out of the hall. As he did so he appeared tired and somewhat frail. It dawned upon us all that his life may soon be coming to an end.

Baba returned to India and continued on with preparations for the Pattabhishek, the transferring of the power to Swami Nityananda and Swami Chidvilasananda whom he designated would be co-successors. After that occasion he also began to withdraw from a lot of public interaction, sitting silently in the darshan line. He commented to those close to him, “I am happy to talk to children and the dogs. People are so unkind to each other, they just want to complain and criticize.”

In the months prior to his taking mahasamadhi, Baba continued to give shaktipat. The small room in the center of the meditation room adjacent to his quarters had been demolished. Only those close to him knew he had directed this in order to prepare for his Samadhi shrine. It had been turned into a large meditation room. Somehow the word got out, though it was not public at all that Baba was giving shaktipat in that room during the *Shiva Mahimna* chant. People went in clamoring for the receipt of his grace.

I went in one evening and was overwhelmed by the level of intense emotion on the part of the people who were wanting to receive shaktipat from Baba. The room was thick with emotional fervor. Baba went around in what was a totally dark room and touched people in different ways. Some reported that he was hitting them with his foot at the base of their spine, others that he was blowing into their noses with his own breath or repeating a mantra into their ear. I actually felt a bit uncomfortable in that room. I felt I had received so much from Baba over the years, it was almost indecent for me to be in this atmosphere of intense grasping. I learned later that Baba had several young girls attending to him during that time; he would go into his adjacent room, have various interactions of an apparent sexual nature, and then return to the seething room to give shaktipat.

I never returned, and shortly thereafter returned to Australia, only to be advised in a couple of months that Baba had taken what is described for a yogi as mahasamadhi; he departed his body as a result of a major heart attack.

Conclusion:

At the conclusion of his visit to each city during his world tours, Baba gave a particularly exalted talk on how life is a play of light and shadows. This was always a sublime teaching, filled with the highest truth, beyond duality of a seeker, a Guru or anything to be attained. I find it a fitting metaphor for us to determine the value of what occurred within our lives, minds and hearts as a result of contact with Baba Muktananda.

If we choose to hold onto the light of what we received from our time with Baba as a treasure that can carry us to the highest realization of our own nature as consciousness, we can fulfill the great aspiration he had for each of us who had contact with him and practiced sadhana and meditation under his guidance.

Alternatively, if some choose to allow the shadows of his actions to submerge their perceptions into a murky sphere of doubt and disillusionment, then again that is a choice leading to the irrevocable consequences of that perception. What is required is a perspective beyond the two extremes of denial or rationalization. His interactions with young women cannot be excused from conventional standards. However, in order to make a fair assessment, for the purpose of his and our own spiritual legacy, a vast open perspective and deep understanding of the tantric tradition which specifically works with the transmutation of energies of desire, particularly sexual energy, is required .⁷

Through attempting to understand his actions and motivations, throughout the entirety of his life and the impact on the tens of thousands of people whose lives were touched profoundly by him, we can discriminate rather than judge. We can touch forgiveness and generosity within our own hearts towards ourselves and others on the path. In each case we experience the world as we see it,” *Ya drishti, sa shrishthi*” was one of Baba’s most frequent teachings.

Excerpts from Baba’s talk “Play of Light and Shadows”:

“If you were to examine your life with an outlook filled with the knowledge of humanity, you would realize that it is nothing but a play of sunlight and shadow, that it is not different from a drama, or from a joyful dream. This play of creation is filled with unique colors and manifestations. Like clouds in the autumn sky which keep forming and dissolving, forming and dissolving, in your life different colors shine and sparkle for a while and then fade away.

“Virtue turns into sin, sin turns into virtue. Joy turns into grief, and grief into Joy... Behind everything there is great Love. There is Consciousness. There is the Guru’s compassion. There is the extraordinary, yet subtle desire to be reunited with the Self. You will be awakened within. Can you be awakened? Can you drink the nectar of your own love? With the knowledge of That, can you recognize your own Self in countless forms? When it arises within you, you will be truly alive.”

This article is written entirely from the original notes and transcripts of notes that I made during my time living with Baba in India and on tour. It is not intended for

any kind of publication, nor to represent any kind of official presentation of information. It reflects my own experiences and perception. As such it may or may not be helpful to others in digesting their own ultimate assessment regarding their legacy from Baba. It can be shared with friends for such a purpose.

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Comments by Swami Abhayananda

When we contemplate Baba Muktananda's actions toward the end of his life concerning the young women around him, we have to admit that those actions cast a dark, dense cloud over his previous career, and in fact destroyed what had been shaping up as a glorious legacy. And no matter how much we may wish we could have taken him aside and cautioned him against following the dangerous course upon which he'd embarked, everyone knows that Baba took only his own advice, and was wholly responsible for his own actions—not those who concealed them, nor those who revealed them—but him alone.

No doubt he would have gladly sacrificed all that he'd built and all that had been accomplished for the sake of one more individual awakened to their own divinity; but we can't help wondering if it was necessary to pay so dear a price for that final shaktipat. For not only his own reputation and esteem were irreparably damaged, but so were the reputations and lives of his many trusting followers. It was a heavy toll, accompanied by so much grief and agony, and to many so very regretful. I long ago transcended my history with Baba Muktananda, and simply stopped thinking about it; but something in me could not quite let go. Deep in my heart, his greatness called out for recognition, and the mystery of his inexplicable behavior toward the end of his life cried out for resolution. And yet, though we know more now than we once did, nothing seems to be really resolved.

It is now thirty-three years after the death of Baba Muktananda, and we are still deeply preoccupied with his life and legacy. Why? Because this preoccupation is concerned with issues regarding not only our own personal allegiances and histories, but our deep philosophical issues as well—issues of moral ethics, of power, of right and wrong, and of free will. And these are issues that cannot be avoided, even in the face of the very best efforts of some to avoid them. We can't help noting that Baba's Guru, Bhagavan Nityananda, who certainly had the same power and the same prospect in his later years of fortifying his shakti through tantric methods, chose rather to fade away gracefully, peacefully, and without any controversy surrounding him. But these were two different men, with different

temperaments, appetites, and tendencies resulting from their individual karmic histories. And there is always the fact of free-will (i.e., God's will) as a factor in the different legacies of the two men.

What would *we* have done in Baba Muktananda's shoes? Would we have done differently? Can we really know? Who is so wise as to know the *correct* behavior of one so infused with divine power? We *can't* know. And, so, we must accept that he was what he was—warts and all. In his lifetime he was such a fearsome presence that no one would have dared to pass judgment on him face to face. And even though he's gone, he remains an awesome presence whom none feels qualified to judge. And rightly so, for the truth is: Baba Muktananda was not a mere man; he was the embodiment of freedom and bliss! Who of us is able to define him? He was this, and he was also that. Yet neither this, nor that. Neither good, nor bad—or maybe some of both. He was beyond our comprehension, beyond our expectations. However, there is agreement by everyone who saw him that he was glorious and incomparable; that not even the legendary Lucifer shone so brilliantly. And, like a shining star, unfading within our hearts, he remains as steadfast as before.

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SWAMI DAYANANDA'S NOTES:

1. Forest-dweller phase according to the varnas, when one sees their children's children, or their hair turning grey they should retire to the forest and contemplate the highest truths as laid out by the sages.
2. Rudra is the destroyer manifestation of the Trinity Brahma Vishnu Shiva, seen as the creator, sustainer and destroyer functions of the universe.
3. See Alex Berzin, "how to have a healthy guru disciple relationship" available online on the Berzin archives.
4. *urdhvaretas*: One in whom the sexual fluid flows upwards and is not emitted in any sexual encounter.
5. Many of these conversations were transcribed and published in the book "In the Company of a Siddha", edited by Swami Dayananda (Karen Schaefer) Published by SYDA 1980.

6. Parabdhā karma - which bears fruit in this lifetime as result of past life actions.

7. Berzin, Alexander. *Relating to a Spiritual Teacher: Building a Healthy Relationship. Part II: The Dynamics of a Healthy Student-Teacher Relationship* This book available through Berzin Archives on the internet provides one of the most thorough and culturally beneficial of many books that have been written on the issue of betrayal between teachers and students.

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